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# RODERICK HUDSON.

BY

HENRY JAMES, Jr.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

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# RODERICK HUDSON.

## I.

THE brilliant Roman winter came round again, and Rowland enjoyed it in a certain way more deeply than before. He grew passionately, unreasoningly fond of all Roman sights and sensations, and to breathe the Roman atmosphere seemed a needful condition of being. He could not have defined and explained the nature of his great relish, nor have made up the sum of it by adding together his calculable pleasures. It was a large, vague, idle, half profitless emotion, of which perhaps the most pertinent thing that may be said is that it brought with it a sort of relaxed acceptance of the present, the actual, the sensuous—of life on the terms of

the moment. It was perhaps for this very reason that in spite of the charm which Rome flings over one's mood there ran through Rowland's meditations an undertone of melancholy natural enough in a mind which finds its horizon sensibly limited—even by a magic circle. Whether it be that one tacitly concedes to the Roman Church the monopoly of a guarantee of immortality, so that if one is indisposed to bargain with her for the precious gift one must do without it altogether; or whether in an atmosphere so heavily weighted with echoes and memories one grows to believe that there is nothing in one's consciousness that is not foredoomed to moulder and crumble and become dust for the feet and possible malaria for the lungs, of future generations—the fact at least remains that one parts half willingly with one's hopes in Rome and misses them only under some very exceptional stress of circumstance. For this reason it may perhaps be said that there is no other place in which one's daily temper

has such a mellow serenity, and none at the same time in which acute attacks of depression are more intolerable. Rowland found, in fact, a perfect response to his prevision that to live in Rome was an education to the senses and the imagination; but he sometimes wondered whether this were not a questionable gain in case of one's not being prepared to subside into soft dilettantism. His customary tolerance of circumstances seemed sometimes to pivot about by a mysterious inward impulse and look his conscience in the face. "But afterwards . . . . ?" it seemed to ask, with a long reverberation; and he could give no answer but a shy affirmation that there was no such thing as to-morrow and that to-day was uncommonly fine. He often felt heavy-hearted; he was sombre without knowing why; there were no visible clouds in his heaven, but there were cloud-shadows on his mood. Shadows projected they often were, without his knowing it, by an undue apprehension that things

after all might not go so ideally well with Roderick. When he caught himself fidgeting it vexed him, and he rebuked himself for taking things unmanfully hard. If Roderick chose to follow a crooked path, it was no fault of his; he had given him, he would continue to give him, all that he had offered him—friendship, sympathy, advice. He had not undertaken to make him over!

If Rowland felt his roots striking and spreading in the Roman soil, Roderick also surrendered himself with renewed liberality to the local influence. More than once he declared to his companion that he meant to live and die within the shadow of Saint Peter's and that he cared little if he should never again draw breath in American air. "For a man of my temperament Rome is the only possible place," he said; "it's better to recognise the fact early than late. So I shall never go home unless I am absolutely forced."

"What is your idea of 'force'?" asked

Rowland smiling. "It seems to me you have an excellent reason for going home some day or other."

"Ah you mean my engagement?" Roderick answered with unaverted eyes. "Yes, there is a little understanding of that sort at Northampton!" And he gave a little vaguely appreciative sigh. "To reconcile Northampton and Rome is rather a problem. Mary had better come out here. Even at the worst I have no intention of giving up Rome for six or eight years, and a union deferred for that length of time would be rather absurd."

"Miss Garland could hardly leave your mother," Rowland observed.

"Oh, of course my mother should come! I think I will suggest it in my next letter. It will take her a year or two to make up her mind to it, but if she consents it will brighten her up. It's too small and dry a life over there, even for a timid old lady. It is hard to imagine," he added, "any change in Mary being a change for the better; but I should

like her to take a look at the world and have her ideas enlarged a little. One is never so good, I suppose, but that one can improve."

"If you wish your mother and Miss Garland to come," Rowland suggested, "you had better go home and bring them."

"Oh, I can't think of leaving Europe for many a day. At present it would quite break the charm. I am just beginning to profit, to get used to things and take them naturally. I am sure the sight of Northampton Main Street would permanently upset me."

It was reassuring to hear that Roderick in his own view was but "just beginning" to spread his wings, and Rowland, if he had had any forebodings, might have suffered them to be modified by this declaration. This was the first time since their meeting at Geneva that Roderick had mentioned his cousin's name, but the ice being broken he indulged for some time afterwards in frequent allusions to his betrothed, which always had an accent of scrupulous, of almost studied, consideration.

An uninitiated observer, hearing him, would have imagined her to be a person of a certain age—possibly an affectionate maiden aunt—who had once done him a kindness which he highly appreciated; perhaps presented him with a cheque for a thousand dollars. Rowland noted the difference between his present frankness and his reticence during the first six months of his engagement, and sometimes wondered whether it were not rather an anomaly that he should expatiate more largely as the happy event receded. He had wondered over the whole matter first and last in a great many different ways—he had looked at it in all possible lights. There was something uncommonly hard to explain in the fact of his having fallen in love with his cousin. She was not, as Rowland conceived her, the sort of girl he would have been likely to fancy, and the operation of sentiment, in all cases so mysterious, was particularly so in this one. Just why it was that Roderick should not in consistency have been captivated, his compa-

nion would have been at a loss to say; but I think the conviction had its roots in an unformulated comparison between himself and the accepted suitor. Roderick and he were as different as two men could be, and yet Roderick had taken it into his head to fall in love with a woman for whom he himself had been keeping in reserve for years a deeply characteristic passion. That if Rowland Mallet happened to be very much struck with the merits of Roderick's mistress, the irregularity here was hardly Roderick's, was a view of the case to which our virtuous hero did scanty justice. There were women, he said to himself, whom it was every one's business to fall in love with a little—women beautiful, brilliant, artful, easily fascinating. Miss Light, for instance, was one of these; every man who spoke to her did so if not in the language at least with something of the agitation, the divine tremor, of a lover. There were other women—they might have great beauty, they might have small; perhaps they were gene-

rally to be classified as plain—whose triumphs in this line were rare but immutably permanent. Such a one, conspicuously, was Mary Garland. Upon the doctrine of probabilities it was unlikely that she should have had an equal charm for each of them, and was it not possible therefore that the charm for Roderick had been simply the charm imagined, unquestionably accepted, the general charm of youth, sympathy, kindness—of the present feminine, in short—enhanced indeed by the advantage of an expressive countenance? The charm in this case for Rowland was—*the* charm!—the mysterious, individual, essential woman. There was an element in the charm, as his companion saw it, which Rowland was obliged to recognise, but which he forbore to linger upon; the rather important attraction, namely, of reciprocity. As to the girl being in love with Roderick and commending herself by this accident, this was a point with which his imagination ventured to take no liberties; partly because it would have been

indelicate and partly because it would have been vain. He contented himself with feeling that she was still as vivid an image in his own memory as she had been five days after he left her, and with drifting nearer and nearer to the conviction that at just that crisis any other girl would have answered Roderick's sentimental needs as well. Any other woman indeed would do so still! Roderick had confessed as much to him at Geneva in saying that he had been taking at Baden the measure of his susceptibility.

His extraordinary success in modelling the bust of the beautiful Miss Light was pertinent evidence of this amiable quality. She sat to him repeatedly for a fortnight, and the work was rapidly finished. On one of the last days Roderick asked Rowland to come and give his opinion as to what was still wanting; for the sittings had continued to take place in Mrs. Light's apartment, the studio being pronounced too damp for the fair model. When Rowland presented himself, Christina, still in

her white dress, with her shoulders bare, was standing before a mirror readjusting her hair, the arrangement of which on this occasion had apparently not met the young sculptor's approval. He stood beside her, directing the operation with a peremptoriness of tone which seemed to Rowland to denote a considerable advance in intimacy. As Rowland entered, Christina was losing patience. "Do it yourself then!" she cried, and with a rapid movement unloosed the great coil of her tresses and let them fall over her shoulders.

They were magnificent, and with her perfect face dividing their rippling flow she looked like some immaculate saint of legend being led to martyrdom. Rowland's eyes presumably betrayed his admiration, but her own manifested no consciousness of it. If Christina was a coquette, as the remarkable timeliness of this incident might have suggested, she was not a superficial one.

"Hudson 's a sculptor," said Rowland with warmth. "But if I were only a painter!"

"Thank Heaven you are not!" said Christina. "I am having quite enough of this minute inspection of my charms."

"My dear young man, hands off!" cried Mrs. Light, coming forward and seizing her daughter's hair. "Christina love, I am surprised."

"Is it indelicate?" Christina asked. "I beg Mr. Mallet's pardon." Mrs. Light gathered up the dusky locks and let them fall through her fingers, glancing at her visitor with a significant smile. Rowland had never been in the East, but if he had attempted to make a sketch of an old slave-merchant calling attention to the "points" of a Circassian beauty, he would have depicted such a smile as Mrs. Light's. "Mamma is not really shocked," added Christina in a moment, as if she had guessed her mother's by-play. "She is only afraid that Mr. Hudson might have injured my hair, and that, *per conseguenza*, I should sell for less."

"You unnatural child!" cried mamma.

"You deserve that I should make a fright of you!" And with half a dozen skilful passes she twisted the tresses into a single picturesque braid, placed high on the head, as a kind of coronal.

"What does your mother do when she wants to do you justice?" Rowland asked, observing the admirable line of the young girl's neck.

"I do her justice when I say she says very improper things. What is one to do with such a thorn in the flesh?" Mrs. Light demanded.

"Think of it at your leisure, Mr. Mallet," said Christina, "and when you have discovered something let us hear. But I must tell you that I shall not willingly believe in any remedy of yours, for you have something in the expression of your face that particularly provokes me to make the remarks that my mother so sincerely deplores. I noticed it the first time I saw you. I think it's because your face is so broad. For some reason or other broad faces exasperate me;

they fill me with a kind of *rabbia.* Last summer at Carlsbad there was an Austrian count, with enormous estates and some great office at court. He was very attentive—seriously so; he was really very far gone. *Cela ne tenait qu'à moi!* But I couldn't; he was impossible! He must have measured from ear to ear at least a yard and a half. And he was blond too, which made it worse—as blond as Stenterello; pure fleece! So I said to him frankly, 'Many thanks, Herr Graf; your uniform is magnificent but your face is too fat.'"

"I am afraid that mine also," said Rowland with a smile, "seems just now to have assumed an unpardonable latitude."

"Oh, I take it you know very well that we are looking for a husband and that none but tremendous swells need apply. Surely before these gentlemen, mamma, I may speak freely; they are disinterested. Mr. Mallet won't do, because, though he is rich, he is not rich enough. Mamma made that discovery the

day after we went to see you, moved to it by the promising look of your furniture. I hope she was right, eh? Unless you have millions, you know, you have no chance."

"I feel like a beggar," said Rowland.

"Oh, some better girl than I will decide some day, after mature reflection, that on the whole you have enough. Mr. Hudson, of course, is nowhere; he has nothing but his genius and his *beaux yeux*."

Roderick had stood looking at Christina intently while she delivered herself, softly and slowly, of this surprising nonsense. When she had finished, she turned and looked at him; their eyes met and he blushed a little. "Let me model you, and he who can may marry you!" he said, abruptly.

Mrs. Light, while her daughter talked, had been adding a few touches to her coiffure. "She is not so silly as you might suppose," she said to Rowland with dignity. "If you will give me your arm we will go and look at the bust."

"Does that represent a silly girl?" Christina demanded when they stood before it.

Rowland transferred his glance several times from the portrait to the original. "It represents a young lady whom I should not pretend to judge off-hand."

"She may be a fool, but you are not sure. Many thanks! You have seen me half a dozen times. You are either very slow or I am very deep."

"I am certainly slow," said Rowland. "I don't expect to make up my mind about you within six months."

"I give you six months if you will promise then a perfectly frank opinion. Mind, I shall not forget; I shall insist upon it."

"Well, though I am slow I am tolerably brave," said Rowland. "We shall see."

Christina looked at the bust with a sigh. "I am afraid after all," she said, "that there's very little wisdom in it save what the artist has put there. Mr. Hudson looked particularly wise while he was working; he scowled

and growled, but he never opened his mouth. It is very kind of him not to have represented me yawning."

"If I had felt obliged to talk a lot of rubbish to you," said Roderick roundly, "the thing would not have been a tenth so good."

"Is it good after all? Mr. Mallet is a famous connoisseur; has he not come here to pronounce?"

The bust was in fact a very happy performance—Roderick had risen to the level of his subject. It was thoroughly a portrait, and not a vague fantasy executed on a graceful theme, as the busts of pretty women in modern sculpture are apt to be. The resemblance was deep and vivid; there was extreme fidelity of detail and yet a noble simplicity. One could say of the head that, without idealisation, it was a representation of ideal beauty. Rowland however as we know was not fond of exploding into superlatives, and after examining the piece he contented him-

self with suggesting two or three alterations of detail.

"Ah, how can you be so cruel?" demanded Mrs. Light with soft reproachfulness. "It is surely a wonderful thing!"

"Rowland knows it's a wonderful thing," said Roderick smiling. "I can tell that by his face. The other day I finished something he thought bad, and he looked very differently from this."

"How did Mr. Mallet look?" asked Christina.

"My dear Rowland," said Roderick, "I am speaking of my seated woman. You looked as if you had on a pair of tight boots."

"Ah, my child, "you'll not understand that!" cried Mrs. Light. "You never yet had a pair that were small enough."

"It's a pity, Mr. Hudson," said Christina gravely, "that you could not have introduced my feet into the bust. But we can hang a pair of slippers round the neck!"

"I nevertheless like your statues, Roderick," Rowland rejoined, "better than your

jokes. This is admirable. Miss Light, you may be proud!"

"Thank you, Mr. Mallet, for the permission," rejoined the young girl.

"I am dying to see it in the marble, with a red velvet screen behind it," said Mrs. Light.

"Placed there under the Sassoferrato!" Christina went on. "I hope you keep well in mind, Mr. Hudson, that you have not a grain of property in your work, and that if mamma chooses she may have it photographed and the copies sold in the Piazza di Spagna at five francs apiece, without your having a sou of the profits."

"Amen!" said Roderick. "It was so nominated in the bond. My profits are here!" and he tapped his forehead.

"It would be prettier if you said *here!*" And Christina touched her heart.

"My precious child, how you do run on!" murmured Mrs. Light.

"It is Mr. Mallet," the young girl answered. "I can't talk a word of sense so

long as he is in the room. I don't say that to make you go," she added; "I say it simply to justify myself."

"The noble art of self-defence!" said Rowland.

Roderick declared that he must get at work and requested Christina to take her usual position, and Mrs. Light proposed to her visitor that they should adjourn to her boudoir. This was a small room, hardly more spacious than an alcove, opening out of the drawing-room and having no other issue. Here, as they entered, on a divan near the door, Rowland perceived the Cavaliere Giacosa, with his arms folded, his head dropped upon his breast and his eyes closed.

"Sleeping at his post!" said Rowland, smiling.

"That's a punishable offence," rejoined Mrs. Light sharply. She was on the point of calling him in the same tone, when he suddenly opened his eyes, stared a moment, and then rose with a smile and a bow.

"Excuse me, dear lady," he said, "I was overcome by the—the great heat."

"Nonsense, Cavaliere!" cried the lady, "you know we are perishing here with the cold! You had better go and cool yourself in one of the other rooms."

"I obey, dear lady," said the Cavaliere; and with another salutation to Rowland he departed, walking very discreetly on his toes. Rowland outstayed him but a short time, for he was not fond of Mrs. Light, and he found nothing very inspiring in her frank intimation that if he chose he might become a favourite. He was disgusted with himself for pleasing her; he confounded his fatal urbanity. In the courtyard of the palace he overtook the Cavaliere, who had stopped at the porter's lodge to say a word to his little girl. She was a young lady of very tender years and she wore a very dirty pinafore. He had taken her up in his arms and was singing an infantine rhyme to her, and she was staring at him with big soft Roman eyes.

On seeing Rowland he put her down with a kiss, and stepped forward with a conscious grin, an unresentful admission that he was sensitive both to chubbiness and to ridicule. Rowland began to pity him again; he had taken his dismissal from the drawing-room so meekly.

"You don't keep your promise to come and see me," said the young man. "Don't forget it. I want you to tell me about Rome thirty years ago."

"Thirty years ago? Ah, dear sir, Rome is Rome still; a place where strange things happen! But happy things too, since I have your renewed permission to call. You do me too much honour. Is it in the morning or in the evening that I should least intrude?"

"Take your own time, Cavaliere; only come sometime. I depend upon you," said Rowland.

The Cavaliere thanked him with a humble obeisance. To old Giacosa, too, he felt that

he was, in Roman phrase, sympathetic; but the idea of pleasing this extremely reduced gentleman was not disagreeable to him.

Miss Light's bust stood for a while on exhibition in Roderick's studio, and half the foreign colony came to see it. With the completion of his work, however, Roderick's visits at the Palazzo F—— by no means came to an end. He spent half his time in Mrs. Light's drawing-room, and began to be talked about as "attentive" to Christina. The success of the bust restored his equanimity, and in the garrulity of his good-humour he suffered Rowland to see that she was just now the object uppermost in his thoughts. Rowland, when they talked of her, was rather listener than speaker; partly because Roderick's own tone was so resonant and exultant, and partly because, when his companion laughed at him for having called her unsafe, he was too perplexed to defend himself. The impression remained that she was unsafe; that she was a complex, wilful, pas-

sionate creature who might easily engulf a too confiding spirit in the eddies of her capricious temper. And yet he strongly felt her charm; the eddies had a strange fascination! Roderick, in the glow of that renewed admiration provoked by the fixed attention of portrayal, was never weary of descanting on the extraordinary perfection of her beauty.

"I had no idea of it," he said, "till I began to look at her with an eye to reproducing line for line and curve for curve. Her face is the most exquisite piece of modelling that ever came from creative hands. Not a line without meaning, not a hair's breadth that is not admirably finished. And then her mouth! It is as if a pair of lips had been shaped to utter pure truth without doing it dishonour!" Later, after he had been working for a week, he declared that if the girl had been inordinately plain she would still be the most fascinating of women. "I have quite forgotten her beauty," he said, "or

rather I have ceased to perceive it as something distinct and defined, something independent of the rest of her. She is all one, and all consummately interesting!"

"What does she do—what does she say, that is so remarkable?" Rowland had asked.

"Say? Sometimes nothing — sometimes everything. She is never the same. Sometimes she walks in and takes her place without a word, without a smile, gravely, stiffly, as if it were an awful bore. She hardly looks at me, and she walks away without even glancing at my work. On other days she laughs and chatters and asks endless questions and pours out the most irresistible nonsense. She is a creature of moods; you can't count upon her; she keeps observation on the stretch. And then, bless you, she has seen so much of the world! Her talk is full of the strangest allusions!"

"It is altogether a very singular type of young lady," said Rowland, after the visit which I have related at length. "It may

be a charm, but it is certainly not the orthodox charm of marriageable maidenhood, the charm of shrinking innocence and soft docility. Our American girls are accused of being more knowing than any others, and this wonderful damsel is nominally an American. But it has taken twenty years of Europe to make her what she is! The first time we saw her, I remember you called her a product of the old world, and certainly you were not far wrong."

"Ah, she has an atmosphere," said Roderick, in a tone of high appreciation.

"Young unmarried women should be careful not to have too much!"

"Ah, you don't forgive her for hitting you so hard! A man ought to be flattered at such a girl as that taking so much notice of him."

"A man is never flattered at a woman's not liking him," said Rowland.

"Are you sure she doesn't like you? That's to the credit of your humility. A

fellow of more vanity might, on the evidence, persuade himself that he was in favour."

"He would have also," said Rowland laughing, "to be a fellow of remarkable ingenuity!" He asked himself privately how the deuce Roderick reconciled it to his conscience to think so much more of the girl he was not engaged to than of the other. But it amounted almost to arrogance in poor Rowland, you may say, to pretend to know how often Roderick thought of Mary Garland. He wondered gloomily at any rate whether for men of his companion's large easy power there was not a larger moral law than for narrow mediocrities like himself, who, yielding Nature a meagre interest on her investment (such as it was), had no reason to expect from her this affectionate laxity as to their accounts. Was it not a part of the eternal fitness of things that Roderick, while rhapsodizing about Christina Light, should have it at his command to look at you with eyes of the most guileless and unclouded blue and to

shake off your musty imputations by a toss of his picturesque brown locks? Or had he, in fact, no conscience to speak of? Happy fellow, either way!

Our friend Gloriani came, among others, to congratulate Roderick on his model and what he had made of her. "Devilish pretty, through and through!" he said as he looked at the bust. "Capital handling of the neck and throat; lovely work on the nose. You are a detestably lucky fellow, my boy! But you ought not to have squandered such material on a simple bust; you should have made a great imaginative figure. If I could only have got hold of her I would have put her into a statue in spite of herself. What a pity she is not a ragged Trasteverine whom we might have for a franc an hour! I have been carrying about in my head for years a delicious design for a fantastic figure, but it has always stayed there for want of a tolerable model. I have seen intimations of the type, but this consummate creature is the perfection

of it. As soon as I saw her I said to myself, 'By Jove, there's my statue in the flesh!'"

"What is your subject?" asked Roderick.

"Don't take it ill," said Gloriani. "You know I am the very deuce for observation. She would make a magnificent Herodias!"

If Roderick had taken it ill (which was unlikely, for we know he thought Gloriani an ass and expected little of his wisdom), he might have been soothed by the candid incense of Sam Singleton, who came and sat for an hour in a sort of mental prostration before both bust and artist. But Roderick's attitude in regard to his patient little devotee was one of undisguised though friendly amusement; and indeed from a strictly plastic point of view the poor fellow's diminutive stature and grotesque physiognomy were a bribe to levity. "Ah, don't envy our friend," Rowland said to Singleton afterwards, on his expressing with a little groan of depreciation of his own paltry performances his sense of the brilliancy of Roderick's talent. "You sail nearer the

shore, but you sail in smoother waters. Be contented with what you are and paint me another picture."

"Oh, I don't envy Hudson anything he possesses," Singleton said, "because to take anything away would spoil his beautiful completeness. 'Complete,' that's what he is; while we little clevernesses are like half ripened plums, only good eating on the side that has had a glimpse of the sun. Nature has made him so, and fortune confesses to it! He is the handsomest fellow in Rome, he has the most genius, and as a matter of course the most beautiful girl in the world comes and offers to be his model. If that is not completeness where shall we find it?"

## II.

One morning, going into Roderick's studio, Rowland found the young sculptor entertaining Miss Blanchard—if this is not too flattering a description of his gracefully passive tolerance of her presence. He had never liked her and never climbed into her sky studio to observe her wonderful manipulation of petals. He had once quoted Tennyson against her—

> "And is there any moral shut
> Within the bosom of the rose?"

"In all Miss Blanchard's roses you may be sure there is a moral," he had said. "You can see it sticking out its head, and if you go to smell the flower it scratches your nose." But on this occasion she had come with a

propitiatory gift—introducing her friend Mr. Leavenworth. Mr. Leavenworth was a tall, expansive, bland gentleman, with a carefully brushed whisker and a spacious, fair, well-favoured face, which seemed somehow to have more room in it than was occupied by a smile of superior benevolence, so that (with his smooth white forehead) it bore a certain resemblance to a large parlour with a very florid carpet but no pictures on the walls. He held his head high, talked impressively, and told Roderick within five minutes that he was a widower, travelling to distract his mind, and that he had lately retired from the proprietorship of large mines of borax in Pennsylvania. Roderick supposed at first that under the influence of his bereavement he had come to order a tombstone; but observing the extreme blandness of his address to Miss Blanchard he credited him with a judicious prevision that by the time the tombstone should be completed a monument of his inconsolability might

have become an anachronism. Mr. Leavenworth however was disposed to order something.

"You will find me eager to patronise our indigenous talent," he said. "You may be sure that I have employed a native architect for the large residential structure that I am erecting on the banks of the Ohio. I have sustained a considerable loss; but are we not told that art is a consolation. That's why I have come to you, sir. In a tasteful home, surrounded by the memorials of my wanderings, I hope to recover my moral tone. I ordered in Paris the complete appurtenances of a dining-room. Do you think you could do something for my library? It is to be filled with well-selected authors, and I think a pure white image in this style"—pointing to one of Roderick's statues—"standing out against the morocco and gilt, would have a noble effect. The subject I have already fixed upon. I desire an allegorical representation of Culture. Do you think now," asked Mr.

Leavenworth encouragingly, "you could rise to the conception?"

"A most interesting subject for a truly serious mind," remarked Miss Blanchard.

Roderick looked at her a moment and then —"The simplest thing I could do," he said, "would be to make a full-length portrait of Miss Blanchard. I could give her a scroll in her hand, and that would do for the allegory."

Miss Blanchard coloured; the compliment might be ironical; and there was ever afterwards a reflection of her uncertainty in her opinion of Roderick's genius. Mr. Leavenworth responded that with all deference to Miss Blanchard's beauty he desired something colder, more monumental, more impersonal. "If I were to be the happy possessor of a likeness of Miss Blanchard," he added, "I should prefer to have it in no factitious disguise!"

Roderick consented to entertain the proposal, and while they were discussing it Rowland

had a little talk with the judicious Augusta. "Who is your friend?" he asked.

"A very worthy man. The architect of his own fortune—which is magnificent. One of nature's gentlemen!"

This was a trifle sententious, and Rowland turned to the bust of Miss Light. Like every one else in Rome by this time, Miss Blanchard had an opinion on the young girl's beauty, and in her own fashion she expressed it in a quotable phrase. "She looks half like a Madonna and half like a *ballerina!*"

Mr. Leavenworth and Roderick came to an understanding, and the young sculptor good-naturedly promised to do his best to rise to his patron's conception. "His conception be hanged!" Roderick exclaimed after he had departed. "His conception is sitting on an india-rubber cushion, with a pen in her ear and the lists of the stock exchange in her hand. I shall have to invent something myself. For the money I ought to be able to!"

Mrs. Light meanwhile had fairly established

herself in Roman society. "Heaven knows how!" Madame Grandoni said to Rowland, who had mentioned to her several evidences of the lady's prosperity. "In such a case there is nothing like audacity. A month ago she knew no one but her washerwoman, and now I am told that the cards of Roman princesses are to be seen on her table. She is evidently determined to play a great part, and she has the wit to perceive that, to make remunerative acquaintances, you must seem yourself to be worth knowing. You must have striking rooms and a bewildering variety of dresses; you must give dinners and dances and concerts. She is spending a lot of money, and you'll see that in two or three weeks she will take upon herself to open the season by giving a magnificent ball. Of course it is Christina's beauty that floats her. People go to see her because they are curious."

"And they go again because they are charmed," said Rowland. "Miss Christina is a very remarkable young woman."

"Oh, I know it well; I had occasion to say

so to myself the other day. She came to see me of her own free will, and for an hour she was deeply interesting. I think she is an actress, but she believes in her part while she is playing it. She took it into her head the other day to believe that she was very unhappy, and she sat there, where you are sitting, and told me a tale of her miseries which brought tears into my eyes. She cried profusely, and as naturally as possible. She said she was weary of life and that she knew no one but me she could speak frankly to. She must speak, or she should go mad. She sobbed as if her heart would break. I assure you it's well for you susceptible young men that you don't see her when she sobs. She said in so many words that her mother was an immoral woman. Heaven knows what she meant! She meant I suppose that she makes debts that she knows she can't pay. She said the life they led was horrible; that it was monstrous a poor girl should be dragged about the world to be sold to the highest

bidder. She was meant for better things; she could be perfectly happy in poverty. It was not money she wanted. I might not believe her, but she really cared for serious things. Sometimes she thought of taking poison!"

"What did you say to that?"

"I recommended her to come and see me instead. I would help her about as much and I was on the whole less unpleasant. Of course I could help her only by letting her talk herself out and kissing her and patting her beautiful hands and telling her to be patient and she would be happy yet. About once in two months I expect her to reappear on the same errand and meanwhile to quite forget my existence. I believe I melted to the point of telling her that I would find some good, kind, quiet husband for her; but she declared, almost with fury, that she was sick of the very name of husbands, which she begged I would never mention again. And in fact it was a rash offer; for I am sure that there is not a man of the kind that might really make

a woman happy but would be afraid to marry mademoiselle. Looked at in that way she is certainly very much to be pitied, and indeed, altogether, though I don't think she either means all she says or, by a great deal, says all that she means, I feel very sorry for her."

Rowland met the two ladies about this time at several entertainments and looked at Christina with a kind of imaginative *attendrissement.* He suspected more than once that there had been a passionate scene between them about coming out, and he wondered what arguments Mrs. Light had found effective. But Christina's face told no tales, and she moved about, beautiful and silent, looking absently over people's heads, barely heeding the men who pressed about her, and suggesting somehow that the soul of a world-wearied mortal had found its way into the blooming body of a goddess. "Where in the world has Miss Light been before she is twenty," observers asked, "to have left all her illusions behind?" And the general verdict was that though she

was incomparably beautiful she was intolerably proud. Young ladies to whom the former distinction was not conceded were free to reflect that she was "not at all liked."

It would have been difficult to guess, however, how they reconciled this conviction with a variety of contradictory evidence and in especial with the spectacle of Roderick's inveterate devotion. All Rome might behold that he at least "liked" Christina Light. Wherever she appeared he was either awaiting her or immediately followed her. He was perpetually at her side, trying apparently to preserve some broken thread of talk, the fate of which was to judge by her face profoundly immaterial to the young lady. People in general smiled at the radiant good faith of the handsome young sculptor and asked each other whether he really supposed that beauties of that quality were meant to give themselves to juvenile artists. But although Christina's deportment as I have said was one of superb inexpressiveness, Rowland had derived from

Roderick no suspicion that he suffered from snubbing, and he was therefore surprised at an incident that occurred one evening at a large musical party. Roderick as usual was in the field and on the ladies taking the chairs which had been arranged for them he immediately placed himself beside Christina. As most of the gentlemen were standing, his position made him as conspicuous as Hamlet at Ophelia's feet. Rowland was leaning somewhat apart, against the chimney-piece. There was a long solemn pause before the music began, and in the midst of it Christina rose, left her place, came the whole length of the immense room, with every one looking at her, and stopped before him. She was neither pale nor flushed; she had a soft smile.

"Will you do me a favour?" she asked.

"A thousand!"

"Not now, but at your earliest convenience. Please remind Mr. Hudson that he is not in a New England village—that it is not the

custom in Rome to address one's conversation exclusively, night after night, to the same poor girl, and that——"

The music broke out with a great blare and covered her voice. She made a gesture of impatience, and Rowland offered her his arm and led her back to her seat.

The next day he repeated her words to Roderick, who burst into joyous laughter. "She has a delightful unexpectedness!" he cried. "She must do everything that comes into her head!"

"Had she never asked you before not to talk to her so much?"

"On the contrary, she has often said to me, 'Mind you now, I forbid you to leave me. Here comes that tiresome So-and-so.' She cares as little about the custom as I do. What could be a better proof than her walking up to you with five hundred people looking at her? Is that the custom for young girls in Rome?"

"Why then should she take such a step?"

"Because as she sat there it came into her head. That's reason enough for her! I have imagined she wishes me well, as they say here—though she has never distinguished me in such a way as that!"

Madame Grandoni had foretold the truth; Mrs. Light a couple of weeks later convoked all Roman society to a brilliant ball. Rowland went late, and found the staircase so encumbered with flower-pots and servants that he was a long time making his way into the presence of the hostess. At last he approached her as she stood making curtsies at the door with her daughter by her side. Some of Mrs. Light's curtsies were very low, for she had the happiness of receiving a number of the social potentates of the Roman world. She was rosy with triumph, to say nothing of a less metaphysical cause, and was evidently vastly contented with herself, with her company, and with the general attitude of destiny. Her daughter was less overtly jubilant, and distributed her greetings with im-

partial frigidity. She had never been so beautiful. Dressed simply in vaporous white, relieved with half a dozen white roses, the perfection of her features and of her person, and the mysterious depth of her expression, seemed to glow with the white light of a splendid pearl. She recognised no one individually, and made her salutation slowly, gravely, with her eyes on the ground. Rowland fancied that, as he stood before her, her obeisance was slightly exaggerated, as with an intention of irony; but he smiled philosophically to himself and reflected as he passed on that if she disliked him he had nothing to reproach himself with. He walked about, had a few words with Miss Blanchard, who with a fillet of cameos in her hair was leaning on the arm of Mr. Leavenworth, and at last came upon the Cavaliere Giacosa, modestly stationed in a corner. The little gentleman's coat lappet was decorated with an enormous bouquet and his neck encased in a voluminous white handkerchief of the fashion

of thirty years ago. His arms were folded and he was surveying the scene with contracted eyelids, through which you saw the glitter of his intensely dark vivacious pupil. He immediately embarked on an elaborate apology for not having yet manifested as he felt it his sense of the honour Rowland had done him.

"I am always on service with these ladies, you see," he explained, "and that it is a duty to which one would not willingly be faithless for an instant."

"Evidently," said Rowland, "you are a very devoted friend. Mrs. Light, in her situation, is very happy in having you."

"We are old friends," said the Cavaliere, gravely. "Old friends. I knew the signora many years ago, when she was the prettiest woman in Rome—or rather in Ancona, which is even better. The beautiful Christina now is perhaps the most beautiful young girl in Europe!"

"Very likely," said Rowland.

"Very well, sir, I taught her to read; I guided her little hands to touch the piano." And at these faded memories the Cavaliere's eyes glittered more brightly. Rowland half expected him to proceed with a little flash of long-repressed passion, "And now—and now sir, they treat me as you observed the other day!" But the Cavaliere only looked out at him keenly from among his wrinkles, and seemed to say with all the vividness of the Italian glance, "Oh, I say nothing more. I am not so shallow as to complain!"

Evidently the Cavaliere was not shallow, and Rowland repeated respectfully, "You are a devoted friend."

"That's very true. I am a devoted friend. A man may do himself justice after twenty years!"

Rowland after a pause made some remark about the beauty of the ball. It was very brilliant.

"Stupendous!" said the Cavaliere solemnly. "It is a great day. We have four Roman

princes, to say nothing of others." And he counted them over on his fingers and held up his hand triumphantly. "And there she stands, the girl to whom I—I, Giuseppe Giacosa—taught her alphabet and her piano scales; there she stands in her incomparable beauty and Roman princes come and bow to her! Here, in his quiet corner, her old master permits himself to be proud."

"It is very friendly of him," said Rowland smiling.

The Cavaliere contracted his lids a little more and gave another keen glance. "It is very natural, signore. The Christina is a good girl; she remembers my little services. But here comes," he added in a moment, "the young Prince of the Fine Arts. I am sure he has bowed lowest of all."

Rowland looked round and saw Roderick moving slowly across the room and casting about him his usual luminous unshrinking looks. He presently joined them, nodded familiarly to the Cavaliere, and immediately

demanded of Rowland, "Have you seen her?"

"I have seen Miss Light," said Rowland. "She's magnificent."

"I'm intoxicated with her beauty!" cried Roderick; so loud that several persons turned round.

Rowland saw that he was flushed, and laid his hand on his arm. Roderick was trembling. "If you will go away," Rowland said instantly, "I will go with you."

"Go away?" cried Roderick, almost angrily. "I intend to dance with her!"

The Cavaliere had been watching him attentively; he gently laid his hand on his other arm. "Softly, softly, dear young man," he said. "Let me speak to you as a friend."

"Oh, speak even as an enemy and I shall not mind it," Roderick answered frowning.

"Be very reasonable then and go away."

"Why the devil should I go away?"

"Because you are in love," said the Cavaliere.

"I might as well be in love here as in the streets."

"Carry your love as far as possible from Christina. She will not listen to you—she can't."

"She 'can't'?" demanded Roderick. "She is not a person of whom you may say that. She can if she will; she does as she chooses."

"Up to a certain point. It would take too long to explain; I only beg you to believe that if you continue to love Miss Light you will be very unhappy. Have you a princely title? have you a princely fortune? Otherwise you can never have her."

And the Cavaliere folded his arms again, like a man who has done his duty. Roderick wiped his forehead and looked askance at Rowland; he seemed to be guessing his thoughts and they made him blush a little. But he smiled blandly, and addressing the Cavaliere, "I am much obliged to you for the information," he said. "Now that I have obtained it, let me tell you that I am no

more in love with Miss Light than you are. My friend here knows that. I admire her—yes, immensely. But that's no one's business but my own, and though I have as you say neither a princely title nor a princely fortune, I mean to suffer neither those advantages nor those who possess them to diminish my right."

"If you are not in love, my dear young man," said the Cavaliere with his hand on his heart and an apologetic smile, "so much the better! But let me entreat you as an affectionate friend to keep a watch on your emotions. You are young, you are handsome, you have a brilliant genius and a generous heart, but—I may say it almost with authority—Christina is not for you!"

Whether Roderick were in love or not, he was nettled by what apparently seemed to him an obtrusive negation of an inspiring possibility. "You speak as if she had made her choice!" he cried. "Without pretending to confidential information on the subject, I am sure she has not."

"No, but she must make it soon," said the Cavaliere. And raising his forefinger, he laid it against his under lip. "She must choose a name and a fortune—and she will!"

"She will do exactly as her inclination prompts! She will marry the man who pleases her, if he hasn't a dollar! I know her better than you."

The Cavaliere turned a little paler than usual and smiled more urbanely. "No, no, my dear young man, you do not know her better than I. You have not watched her day by day for twenty years. I too have admired her. She is a good girl; she has never said an unkind word to me; the blessed Virgin be thanked! But she must have a brilliant destiny; it has been marked out for her and she will submit. You had better believe me; it may save you much suffering."

"We shall see!" said Roderick with an excited laugh.

"Certainly we shall see. But I retire

from the discussion," the Cavaliere added. "I have no wish to provoke you to attempt to prove to me that I am wrong. You are already excited."

"No more than is natural to a man who in an hour or so is to dance a cotillon with a divinity."

"A cotillon? has she promised?"

Roderick patted the air with a grand confidence. "You'll see!" His gesture might almost have been taken to mean that the state of his relations with the "divinity" was such that they quite dispensed with vain preliminaries.

The Cavaliere gave an exaggerated shrug. "You will make a great many mourners!"

"He has made a mourner already!" Rowland murmured to himself. This was evidently not the first time that reference had been made between Roderick and the Cavaliere to the young man's possible passion, and Roderick had failed to consider it the simplest and most natural course to say in

three words to the vigilant little gentleman that there was no cause for alarm—his affections were preoccupied. Rowland hoped silently with some dryness that his motives for reticence were of a finer kind than they seemed to be. He turned away; it was irritating to look at Roderick's radiant unscrupulous eagerness. The tide was setting towards the supper-room and he drifted with it to the door. The crowd at this point was dense, and he was obliged to wait for some minutes before he could advance. At last he felt his neighbours dividing behind him, and turning he saw Christina pressing her way forward alone. She was looking at no one, and save for the fact of her being alone you would not have supposed she was in her mother's house. As she recognised Rowland she beckoned to him, took his arm, and motioned him to lead her into the supper-room. She said nothing until he had forced a passage and they stood somewhat isolated.

"Take me into the most out-of-the-way

corner you can find," she then said, "and then go and get me a piece of bread."

"Nothing more? There seems to be everything conceivable."

"A simple roll. Nothing more on your peril. Only bring something for yourself."

It seemed to Rowland that the embrasure of a window (embrasures in Roman palaces are deep) was a retreat sufficiently obscure for Christina to execute whatever design she might have contrived against his equanimity. A roll, after he had found her a seat, was easily procured. As he presented it, he remarked that, frankly speaking, he was at a loss to understand why she should have selected for the honour of a tête-à-tête an individual for whom she had so little taste.

"Ah yes, I dislike you!" said Christina. "To tell the truth I had forgotten it. There are so many people here whom I dislike more that when I espied you just now you seemed like an intimate friend. But I have not come into this corner to talk nonsense,"

she went on. "You must not think I always do, eh?"

"I have never heard you do anything else," said Rowland, deliberately, having decided that he owed her no compliments.

"Very good. I like your frankness. It's quite true. You see I am a strange girl. To begin with I am frightfully egotistical. Don't flatter yourself you have said anything very clever if you ever take it into your head to tell me so. I know it much better than you. So it is, I can't help it. I am tired to death of myself; I would give all I possess to get out of myself; but somehow at the end I find myself so vastly more interesting than nine-tenths of the people I meet. If a person wished to do me a favour I would say to him, 'I beg you with tears in my eyes to interest me. Be strong, be positive, be imperious, if you will; only be *something*—something that in looking at I can forget my detestable self!' Perhaps that is nonsense too. If it is, I can't help it. I can only apologise for

the nonsense that I know to be such and that I talk—oh, for more reasons than I can tell you! I wonder whether if I were to try you would understand me."

"I am afraid I should never understand," said Rowland, "why a person should willingingly talk nonsense."

"That proves how little you know about women. But I like your frankness. When I told you the other day that you displeased me I had an idea you were more formal—how do you say it?—more *guindé*. I am very capricious. To-night I like you better."

"Oh, I am not *guindé*," said Rowland gravely.

"I beg your pardon then for thinking so. Now I have an idea that you would make a useful friend—an intimate friend—a friend to whom one could tell everything. For such a friend what wouldn't I give!"

Rowland looked at her in some perplexity. Was this touching sincerity or unfathomable coquetry? Her beautiful eyes looked divinely

candid; but then if candour was beautiful, beauty was apt to be subtle. "I hesitate to recommend myself out and out for the office," he said, "but I believe that if you were to depend upon me for anything that a friend may do I should not be found wanting."

"Very good. One of the first things one asks of a friend is to judge one not by isolated acts, but by one's whole conduct. I care for your opinion—I don't know why."

"Nor do I, I confess!" said Rowland, with a laugh.

"What do you think of this affair?" she continued, without heeding his laugh.

"Of your ball? Why, it's a very grand affair."

"It's horrible—that's what it is! It's a mere rabble! There are people here whom I never saw before, people who were never asked. Mamma went about inviting every one, asking other people to invite any one they knew, doing anything to have a crowd. I hope she is satisfied! It is not my doing.

I feel weary, I feel angry, I feel like crying. I have twenty minds to escape into my room and lock the door, and let mamma go on with it as she can. By the way," she added in a moment, without a visible reason for the transition, "can you tell me something to read?"

Rowland stared at the disconnectedness of the question.

"Can you recommend me some books?" she repeated. "I know you are a great reader. I have no one else to ask. We can buy no books. We can make debts for jewellery and bonnets and ten-button gloves, but we can't spend a sou for ideas. And yet, though you may not believe it, I like ideas quite as well."

"I shall be most happy to lend you some books," Rowland said. "I will pick some out to-morrow and send them to you."

"No novels, please! I am tired of novels. I can imagine better stories for myself than any I read. Some good poetry, if there is

such a thing nowadays, and some memoirs and histories and books of facts."

"You shall be served. Your taste agrees with my own."

" She was silent a moment, looking at him. Then suddenly—"Tell me something about Mr. Hudson," she exclaimed. You are great friends!"

"Oh yes," said Rowland; "we are great friends."

"Tell me about him. Come, begin!"

"Where shall I begin? You know him for yourself."

"No, I don't know him; I don't find him so easy to know. Since he has finished my bust and began to come here disinterestedly, he has become a great talker. He says very fine things; but does he mean all he says?"

"Few of us do that."

"You do, I imagine. You ought to know, for he tells me you discovered him." Rowland was silent, and Christina continued, "Do you consider him very clever?"

"Unquestionably."

"His talent is really something out of the common way?"

"So it seems to me."

"In short, he is a man of genius?"

"Yes, call it genius."

"And you found him vegetating in a little village and took him by the hand and set him on his feet in Rome?"

"Is that the popular legend?" asked Rowland.

"Oh, you needn't be modest. There was no great merit in it; there would have been none at least on my part in the same circumstances. Real geniuses are not so common, and if I had discovered one in the wilderness, I should have brought him out into the market-place to see how he would behave. It would be excessively amusing. You must find it so to watch Mr. Hudson, eh? Tell me this: do you think he is going to be a great man—become famous, have his life written and all that?"

"I don't prophesy, but I have good hopes."

Christina was silent. She stretched out her bare arm and looked at it a moment absently, turning it so as to see—or almost to see—the dimple in her elbow. This was apparently a frequent gesture with her; Rowland had already observed it. It was as coolly and naturally done as if she had been alone before her toilet-table. "So he is a man of genius," she suddenly resumed. "Don't you think I ought to be extremely flattered to have a man of genius perpetually hanging about? He is the first I ever saw, but I should have known he was not a common mortal. There is something strange about him. To begin with he has no manners. You may say that it's not for me to blame him, for I have none myself. That's very true, but the difference is that I can have them when I wish to (and very charming ones too; I will show you some day); whereas Mr. Hudson will never have them. And yet somehow one sees he is a gentleman. He

seems to have something urging, driving, pushing him, making him restless and defiant. You see it in his eyes. They are the finest, by the way, I ever saw. When a person has such eyes as that, you can forgive him his bad manners. I suppose that is what they call the sacred fire."

Rowland made no answer except to ask her in a moment if she would have another roll. She merely shook her head and went on—

"Tell me how you found him. Where was he—how was he?"

"He was in a place called Northampton. Did you ever hear of it? He was studying law—but not learning it."

"It appears it was something horrible, eh?"

"Something horrible?"

"This little village. No society, no pleasures, no beauty, no life."

"You have received a false impression. Northampton is not so gay as Rome, but Roderick had some charming friends."

"Tell me about them. Who were they?"

"Well, there was my cousin, through whom I made his acquaintance—a delightful woman."

"Young—pretty?"

"Yes, a good deal of both. And very clever."

"Did he make love to her?"

"Not in the least."

"Well, who else?"

"He lived with his mother. She is the best of women."

"Ah yes, I know all that one's mother is. But she does not count as society. And who else?"

Rowland hesitated. He wondered whether Christina's insistance were the result of a general interest in Roderick's antecedents or of a particular suspicion. He looked at her; she was looking at him a little askance, waiting for his answer. As Roderick had said nothing about his engagement to the Cavaliere, it was probable that with this beautiful girl

he had not been more explicit. And yet the thing was announced, it was public; that other girl was happy in it, proud of it. Rowland felt a kind of dumb anger rising in his heart. He deliberated a moment intently.

"What are you frowning at?" Christina asked.

"There was another person," he answered, "the most important of all—the young girl to whom he is engaged."

Christina stared a moment, raising her eyebrows. "Ah, Mr. Hudson is engaged?" she said very simply. "Is she pretty?"

"She is not called a beauty." Rowland meant to practise great brevity, but in a moment he added, "I have seen beauties however who pleased me less."

"Ah, she pleases *you* too? Why don't they marry?"

"Roderick is waiting till he can afford to marry."

Christina slowly put out her arm again and looked at the dimple in her elbow. "Ah, he's

engaged?" she repeated in the same tone. "He never told me."

Rowland perceived at this moment that the people about them were beginning to return to the dancing-room, and immediately afterwards he saw Roderick making his way towards themselves. Roderick presented himself before Miss Light.

"I don't claim that you have promised me the cotillon," he said, "but I consider that you have given me hopes which warrant the confidence that you will dance with me."

Christina looked at him a moment. "Certainly I have made no promises," she said. "It seemed to me that as the daughter of the house I should keep myself free and let it depend on circumstances."

"I beseech you to dance with me!" said Roderick with vehemence.

Christina rose and began to laugh. "You say that very well, but the Italians do it better."

This assertion seemed likely to be put to

the proof. Mrs. Light hastily approached, leading, rather than led by, a tall slim young man, of an unmistakably Southern physiognomy. "My precious love," she cried, "what a place to hide in! We have been looking for you for twenty minutes; I have chosen a cavalier for you—and chosen well!"

The young man disengaged himself, made a ceremonious bow, joined his two hands and murmured with an ecstatic smile, "May I venture to hope, dear signorina, for the honour of your hand?"

"Of course you may!" said Mrs. Light. "The honour is for us!"

Christina hesitated but for a moment, then swept the young man a curtsey as profound as his own salutation. "You are very kind, but you are too late. I have just accepted!"

"Ah, my own darling!" murmured—almost moaned—Mrs. Light.

Christina and Roderick exchanged a single glance—a glance brilliant on each side. She

passed her hand into his arm; he tossed his clustering locks and led her away.

A short time afterwards Rowland saw the young man she had rejected leaning against a doorway. He was ugly, but what is called distinguished-looking. He had a heavy black eye, a sallow complexion, a long thin neck; his hair was cropped *en brosse.* He looked very young, yet extremely bored. He was staring at the ceiling and stroking an imperceptible moustache. Rowland espied the Cavaliere Giacosa hard by and having joined him asked him the young man's name.

"Oh," said the Cavaliere, "he is a *pezzo grosso!* A Neapolitan. Prince Casamassima."

## III.

One day on entering Roderick's lodging (not the modest rooms on the Ripetta which he had first occupied, but a much more sumptuous apartment on the Corso), Rowland found a letter on the table addressed to himself. It was from Roderick, and consisted of but three lines. "I am gone to Frascati—for meditation. If I am not at home on Friday you had better join me." On Friday he was still absent, and Rowland went out to Frascati. Here he found his friend living at the inn and spending his days according to his own account lying under the trees of the Villa Mondragone and reading Ariosto. He was in a sombre mood; "meditation" seemed not to have been fruitful. Nothing especially pertinent to our narrative had passed between

the two young men since Mrs. Light's ball save a few words bearing on an incident of that entertainment. Rowland informed Roderick the next day that he had told Miss Light of his engagement. "I don't know whether you will thank me," he had said, "but it is my duty to let you know it. Miss Light perhaps has already done so."

Roderick looked at him a moment intently, with his colour slowly rising. "Why should I not thank you?" he asked. "I am not ashamed of my engagement."

"As you had not spoken of it yourself I thought you might have a reason for not having it known."

"A man doesn't gossip about such a matter with strangers," Roderick rejoined, with the ring of irritation in his voice.

"With strangers — no!" said Rowland smiling.

Roderick continued his work; but after a moment, turning round with a frown—"If

you supposed I had a reason for being silent, pray why should you have spoken?"

"I did not speak idly, my dear Roderick. I weighed the matter before I spoke, and promised myself to let you know immediately afterwards. It seemed to me that Miss Light had better know that your affections are pledged."

"The Cavaliere then has put it into your head that I am making love to her?"

"No; in that case I should not have spoken to her first."

"Do you mean, then, that she is making love to me?"

"This is what I mean," said Rowland after a pause. "That girl finds you interesting and she is pleased, even though she may feign indifference, at your finding her so. I said to myself that it might save her some sentimental disappointment to know without delay that you are not at liberty to become indefinitely interested in other women."

"You seem to have taken the measure of

my liberty with extraordinary minuteness!" cried Roderick.

"You must do me justice. I am the cause of your separation from Miss Garland, the cause of your being exposed to temptations which she hardly even suspects. How could I ever meet her again," Rowland demanded with much warmth of tone, "if at the end of it all she should be unhappy?"

"I had no idea that she had made such an impression on you! You are too zealous. I take it she didn't charge you to look after her interests."

"If anything happens to you I am accountable. You must understand that."

"That's a view of the situation I can't accept; in your own interest no less than in mine! It can only make us both very uncomfortable. I know all I owe you; I feel it; you know that! But I am not a small boy nor an amiable simpleton any longer, and whatever I do I do with my eyes open. When I do well the merit 's my own; if I do ill the

fault's my own! The idea that I make you nervous is ridiculous. Dedicate your nerves to some better cause and believe that if Miss Garland and I have a quarrel we shall settle it between ourselves."

Rowland had found himself wondering shortly before whether possibly his brilliant young friend were without a conscience; now it dimly occurred to him that he was without a heart. Rowland as we have already intimated was a man with a moral passion, and no small part of it had gone forth into this adventure. There had been from the first no protestations of friendship on either side, but Rowland had implicitly offered everything that belongs to friendship and Roderick had apparently as deliberately accepted it. Rowland indeed had taken an exquisite satisfaction in his companion's easy inexpressive assent to his interest in him. "Here is an uncommonly fine thing," he said to himself; "a nature unconsciously grateful, a man in whom friendship does the thing that love

alone generally has the credit of—knocks the bottom out of pride!" His reflective judgment of Roderick, as time went on, had indulged in a great many irrepressible vagaries; but his affection, his sense of something in his companion's whole personality that appealed to his tenderness and charmed his imagination, had never for an instant faltered. He listened to Roderick's last words, and then he smiled as he rarely smiled—with bitterness.

"I don't at all like your telling me I am too zealous," he said. "If I had not been zealous I should never have cared a fig for you!"

Roderick flushed deeply and thrust his modelling tool up to the handle into the clay. "Say it outright! You have been a great fool to believe in me."

"I don't desire to say it, and you don't honestly believe I do!" said Rowland. "It seems to me I am really very good-natured even to reply to such nonsense."

Roderick sat down, crossed his arms and fixed his eyes on the floor. Rowland looked at him for some moments; it seemed to him that he had never so clearly perceived his strangely commingled character—his strength and his weakness, his picturesque personal attractiveness and his urgent egotism, his exalted ardour and his puerile petulance. It would have made him almost sick however to think that on the whole Roderick was not a generous fellow, and he was so far from having ceased to believe in him that he felt just now more than ever that all this was but the painful complexity of genius. Rowland, who had not a grain of genius either to make one say he was an interested reasoner or to enable one to feel that he could afford a dangerous theory or two, adhered to his conviction of the essential salubrity of genius. Suddenly he felt an irresistible pity for his companion; it seemed to him that his beautiful faculty of production was a double-edged instrument, susceptible of being dealt in back-handed

blows at its possessor. Genius was priceless, inspired, divine; but it was also at its hours capricious, sinister, cruel; and men of genius accordingly were alternately very enviable and very helpless. It was not the first time he had had a sense of Roderick's standing passive in the clutch of his temperament. It had shaken him as yet but with a half good-humoured wantonness; but henceforth possibly it meant to handle him more roughly. These were not times therefore for a friend to have a short patience.

"When you err you say the fault's your own," he said at last. "It is because your faults are your own that I heed them."

Rowland's voice, when he spoke with feeling, had an extraordinary amenity. Roderick sat staring a moment longer at the floor, then he sprang up and laid his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder. "You are the best man in the world," he said, "and I am a vile brute. Only," he added in a moment, "*you don't understand me!*" And he looked at him

with eyes of such pure expressiveness that one might have said (and Rowland did almost say so himself) that it was the fault of one's own grossness if one failed to read to the bottom of that beautiful soul.

Rowland smiled sadly. "What is it now? Explain."

"Oh, I can't explain!" cried Roderick impatiently, returning to his work. "I have only one way of expressing my deepest feelings—it's this." And he swung his tool. He stood looking at the half wrought clay for a moment and then flung the instrument down. "And even this half the time plays me false!"

Rowland felt that his irritation had not subsided, and he himself had no taste for saying disagreeable things. Nevertheless he saw no sufficient reason to forbear uttering the words he had had on his conscience from the beginning. "We must do what we can and be thankful," he said. "And let me assure you of this—that it won't help you to become entangled with Miss Light."

Roderick pressed his hand to his forehead with vehemence and then shook it in the air despairingly; a gesture that had become frequent with him since he came to Italy. "No, no, it's no use; you don't understand me! But I don't blame you. You can't!"

"You think it *will* help you then?" said Rowland wondering.

"I think that when you expect a man to produce beautiful and wonderful works of art you ought to allow him a certain freedom of action, you ought to give him a long rope, you ought to let him follow his fancy and look for his material wherever he thinks he may find it! A mother can't nurse her child unless she follows a certain diet; an artist can't bring his visions to maturity unless he has a certain experience. You demand of us to be imaginative, and you deny us the things that feed the imagination. In labour we must be as passionate as the inspired sibyl; in life we must be mere machines. It won't do! When you have got an artist to deal with, you must

take him as he is, good and bad together. I don't say they are pleasant fellows to know or easy fellows to live with; I don't say they satisfy themselves any better than other people. I only say that if you want them to produce you must let them conceive. If you want a bird to sing, you must not cover up its cage. Shoot them, the poor devils, drown them, exterminate them, if you will, in the interest of public morality; it may be morality would gain—I dare say it would! But if you suffer them to live, let them live on their own terms and according to their own inexorable needs!"

Rowland burst out laughing. "I have no wish whatever either to shoot you or to drown you!" he said. "Why defend yourself with such very big guns against a warning offered you altogether in the interest of your freest development? Do you really mean that you have an inexorable need of embarking on a flirtation with Miss Light?—a flirtation as to the felicity of which there may be differences

of opinion, but which cannot at best, under the circumstances, be called innocent. Your last summer's adventures were more so! As for the terms on which you are to live, I had an idea you had arranged them otherwise!"

"I have arranged nothing—thank God! I don't pretend to arrange. I am young and ardent and inquisitive, and I am preoccupied with that girl. That's enough. I shall go as far as the fancy leads me. I am not afraid. Your genuine artist may be sometimes half a madman, but he's not a coward!"

"I see; it's a speculation. But suppose that in your speculation you should come to grief artistically as well as sentimentally?"

"Come what come will! If I'm to fizzle out, the sooner I know it the better. Sometimes I half suspect it. But let me at least go out and reconnoitre for the enemy, and not sit here waiting for him, cudgelling my brains for ideas that won't come!"

Do what he would, Rowland could not think of Roderick's theory of unlimited experimenta-

tion, especially as applied in the case under discussion, as anything but a pernicious illusion. But he saw it was vain to discuss the matter, for inclination was powerfully on Roderick's side. He laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, looked at him a moment with troubled eyes, then shook his head mournfully and turned away.

"I can't work any more," said Roderick. "You have upset me! I'll go and stroll on the Pincian." And he tossed aside his working-jacket and prepared himself for the street. As he was arranging his cravat before the glass, something occurred to him which made him thoughtful. He stopped a few moments afterwards as they were going out, with his hand on the door-knob. "You did from your own point of view an indiscreet thing," he said, "to tell Miss Light of my engagement."

Rowland looked at him with a glance which was partly an interrogation, but partly also an admission.

"If she's the coquette you say," Roderick

added, "you have given her a reason the more!"

"And that's the girl you propose to devote yourself to?" cried Rowland.

"Oh, I don't say it, mind! I only say that she's the most interesting creature in the world! The next time you mean to render me a service pray give me notice beforehand!"

It was perfectly characteristic of Roderick that a fortnight later he should have let his friend know that he depended upon him for society at Frascati as freely as if no irritating topic had ever been discussed between them. Rowland thought him generous, and he had at any rate a liberal faculty of forgetting that he had given you any reason to be displeased with him. It was equally characteristic of Rowland that he complied with his friend's summons without a moment's hesitation. His cousin Cecilia had once told him that he was the dupe of his perverse benevolence. She put the case with too little favour, or too much, as the reader chooses; it is certain at

least that he had a constitutional tendency to magnanimous interpretations. Nothing happened however to suggest to him that he was deluded in thinking that Roderick's secondary impulses were wiser than his primary ones and that the rounded total of his nature had a harmony perfectly attuned to the most amiable of its brilliant parts. Roderick's humour, for the time, was pitched in a minor key; he was lazy, listless and melancholy, but he had never been so softly submissive. Winter had begun by the calendar, but the weather was divinely mild, and the two young men took long slow strolls on the hills and lounged away the mornings in the villas. The villas at Frascati are delicious places and replete with romantic suggestiveness. Roderick as he had said was meditating, and if a masterpiece was to come of his meditations Rowland was perfectly willing to bear him company and coax it along. But Roderick let him know from the first that he was in a miserably sterile mood and, cudgel his brains as he would, could think of nothing

that would serve for the statue he was to make for Mr. Leavenworth.

"It is worse out here than in Rome," he said, "for here I am face to face with the dead blank of my mind! There I couldn't think of anything either, but there I found things to make me forget that I needed to think!" This was as frank an allusion to Christina Light as could have been expected under the circumstances; it seemed indeed to Rowland surprisingly frank—a pregnant example of his companion's strangely irresponsible way of looking at harmful facts. Roderick was silent sometimes for hours, with a puzzled look on his face and a constant fold between his even eyebrows; at other times he talked unceasingly, with a sort of impartial contemplative drawl. Rowland was half a dozen times on the point of asking him what was the matter with him; he was afraid he was going to be ill. Roderick had taken a great fancy to the Villa Mondragone and used to declaim fantastic compliments to it as they

strolled in the winter sunshine on the great terrace which looks towards Tivoli and the iridescent Sabine mountains. He carried his volume of Ariosto in his pocket, and took it out every now and then to spout half a dozen stanzas to his companion. He was as a general thing very little of a reader; but at intervals he would take a fancy to one of the classics and peruse it for a month in disjointed scraps. He had picked up Italian without study, and had a wonderfully proper accent, though in reading aloud he ruined the sense of half the lines he rolled off so sonorously. Rowland, who pronounced badly but understood everything, once said to him that Ariosto was not the poet for a man of his craft; a sculptor should make a companion of Dante. So he lent him the 'Inferno,' which he had brought with him, and advised him to look into it. Roderick took it with some eagerness; perhaps it would brighten his wits. He returned it the next day with disgust; he had found it intolerably depressing.

"A sculptor should model as Dante writes—you are right there," he said. "But when his genius is in eclipse Dante is a dreadfully smoky lamp. By what perversity of fate," he went on, "has it come about that I am a sculptor at all? A sculptor is such a confoundedly special genius; there are so few subjects he can treat, so few things in life that bear upon his work, so few moods in which he himself is inclined to it." (It may be noted that Rowland had heard him a dozen times affirm the flat reverse of all this.) "If I had only been a painter—a little quiet, docile, matter-of-fact painter like our friend Singleton—I should only have to open my Ariosto here to find a subject, to find colour and attitudes, stuffs and composition; I should only have to look up from the page at that mouldy old fountain against the blue sky, at that cypress alley wandering away like a procession of priests in couples, at the crags and hollows of the Sabine hills, to find my picture begun! Best of all would it be to be

Ariosto himself or one of his brotherhood. Then everything in nature would give you a hint and every form of beauty be part of your stock. You wouldn't have to look at things only to say—with tears of rage half the time—'Oh, yes, it's wonderfully pretty, but what the devil can I do with it?' But a sculptor now! That's a pretty trade for a fellow who has got his living to make and yet is so damnably constituted that he can't work to order, and considers that, æsthetically, clock ornaments don't pay! You can't model the serge-coated cypresses, nor those mouldering old Tritons and all the sunny sadness of that dried-up fountain; you can't put the light into marble—the lovely caressing consenting Italian light that you get so much of for nothing! Say that a dozen times in his life a man has a completely plastic vision—a vision in which the imagination recognises a subject and the subject reacts on the imagination. It is a remunerative rate of work, and the intervals are comfortable!"

One morning as the two young men were lounging on the sun-warmed grass at the foot of one of the slanting pines of the Villa Mondragone, Roderick delivered himself of a tissue of lugubrious speculations as to the possible mischances of one's genius. "What if the watch should run down," he asked, "and you should lose the key? What if you should wake up some morning and find it stopped — inexorably, appallingly stopped? Such things have been, and the poor devils to whom they happened have had to grin and bear it. The whole matter of genius is a mystery. It bloweth where it listeth and we know nothing of its mechanism. If it gets out of order we can't mend it; if it breaks down altogether we can't set it going again. We must let it chose its own pace and hold our breath lest it should lose its balance. It's dealt out in different doses, in big cups and little, and when you have consumed your portion it's as *naïf* to ask for more as it was for Oliver Twist to ask for more porridge.

Lucky for you if you have got one of the big cups; we drink them down in the dark, and we can't tell their size until we tip them up and hear the last gurgle. Those of some men last for life; those of others for a couple of years. Come, what are you grinning at?" he went on. "Nothing is more common than for an artist who has set out on his journey on a high-stepping horse to find himself all of a sudden dismounted and invited to go his way on foot. You can number them by the thousand—the people of two or three successes; the poor fellows whose candle burnt out in a night. Some of them groped their way along without it, some of them gave themselves up for blind and sat down by the wayside to beg. Who shall say that I am not one of these? Who shall assure me that my credit is for an unlimited sum? Nothing proves it and I never claimed it; or if I did, I did so in the mere boyish joy of shaking off the dust of Northampton! If you believed so, my dear fellow, you did so at your own

risk! What am I, what are the best of us, but an experiment? Do I succeed—do I fail? It doesn't depend on me! I am prepared for failure. It won't be a disappointment, simply because I shan't survive it. The end of my work shall be the end of my life. When I have played my last card, I shall cease to care for the game. I am not making vulgar threats of suicide; for destiny, I trust, won't add insult to injury by putting me to that abominable trouble. But I have a conviction that if the hour strikes *here*,' and he tapped his forehead, "I shall disappear, dissolve, be carried off in a cloud! For the past ten days I have had the vision of some such fate perpetually swimming before my eyes. My mind is like a dead calm in the tropics, and my imagination as motionless as the phantom ship in the 'Ancient Mariner'!"

Rowland listened to this fine monologue, as he often had occasion to listen to Roderick's flights of eloquence, with a number of mental restrictions. Both in gravity and in gaiety

he said more than he meant, and you did him simple justice if you privately concluded that neither the glow of purpose nor the chill of despair was of so intense a character as his copiousness of illustration implied. The moods of an artist, his exultations and depressions, Rowland had often said to himself, were like the pen-flourishes a writing-master makes in the air when he begins to set his copy. He may bespatter you with ink, he may hit you in the eye, but he writes a magnificent hand. It was nevertheless true that at present poor Roderick gave unprecedented tokens of moral stagnation, and as for genius being held by the precarious tenure he had sketched, Rowland was at a loss to see where he could borrow the authority to contradict him. He sighed to himself and wished that his companion had a trifle more of little Sam Singleton's vulgar steadiness. But then, was Sam Singleton a man of genius? He answered that such reflections seemed to him unprofitable, not to say morbid;

that the proof of the pudding was in the eating; that he did not know about bringing a dead genius back to life again, but that he was satisfied that vigorous effort was a cure for a great many ills that seemed far gone. "Don't bother about your mood," he said, "and don't believe there is any calm so dead that your own lungs can't ruffle it with a breeze. If you have work to do, don't wait to feel like it; set to work and you *will* feel like it."

"Set to work and produce abortions!" cried Roderick with ire. "Preach that to others. Production with me must be either pleasure or nothing. As I said just now, I must either stay in the saddle or not go at all. I won't do second-rate work; I can't if I would. I have no cleverness apart from inspiration. I am not a Gloriani! You are right," he added after a while; "this is unprofitable talk, and it makes my head ache. I shall take a nap and see if I can dream of a bright idea or two."

## IV.

He turned his face upward to the parasol of the great pine, closed his eyes and in a short time forgot his sombre fancies. January though it was, the mild stillness seemed to vibrate with faint midsummer sounds. Rowland sat listening to them and wishing that for the sake of their common comfort Roderick's temper had been graced with a certain absent ductility. He was brilliant, but was he, like many brilliant things, brittle? Suddenly, to his musing sense, the soft atmospheric hum was overscored with distincter sounds. He heard voices beyond a mass of shrubbery, at the turn of a neighbouring path. In a moment one of them began to seem familiar, and an instant later a large white poodle emerged into view. He was

slowly followed by his mistress. Miss Light paused a moment on seeing Rowland and his companion; but though the former perceived that he was recognised she gave no greeting. Presently she walked directly toward him. He rose and was on the point of waking Roderick, but she laid her finger on her lips and motioned him to forbear. She stood a moment looking at Roderick's handsome slumber.

"What delicious oblivion!" she said. "Happy man! Stenterello" — and she pointed to his face—"wake him up!"

The poodle extended a long pink tongue and began to lick Roderick's cheek.

"Why," asked Rowland, "if he is happy?"

"Oh, I want companions in misery! Besides, I want to show off my dog." Roderick roused himself, sat up and stared. By this time Mrs. Light had approached, walking with a gentleman on each side of her. One of these was the Cavaliere Giacosa; the other was Prince Casamassima. "I should have

liked to lie down on the grass and go to sleep," Christina added. "But it would have been unheard of."

"Oh, not quite," said the Prince, in English, in a tone of great precision. "There was already a Sleeping Beauty in the Wood!"

"Charming!" cried Mrs. Light. "Do you hear that, my dear?"

"When the Prince says a brilliant thing it would be a pity to lose it," said the young girl. "Your servant, sir!" And she smiled at him with a grace that might have reassured him if he had thought her compliment ambiguous.

Roderick meanwhile had risen to his feet, and Mrs. Light began to exclaim on the oddity of their meeting and to explain that the day was so lovely that she had been charmed with the idea of spending it in the country. And who would ever have thought of finding Mr. Mallet and Mr. Hudson sleeping under a tree?

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I was not sleeping," said Rowland.

"Don't you know that Mr. Mallet is Mr. Hudson's sheep-dog?" asked Christina. "He was mounting guard to keep away the wolves."

"To indifferent purpose, madam!" said Rowland, indicating the young girl.

"Is that the way you spend your time?' Christina demanded of Roderick. "I never yet happened to learn what men were doing when they supposed women were not watching them but it was something vastly below their reputation."

"When, pray," said Roderick, smoothing his ruffled locks, "are women not watching them?"

"We shall give you something better to do at any rate. How long have you been here? It's an age since I have seen you. We consider you an old inhabitant, and expect you to play host and entertain us."

Roderick said that he could offer them

nothing but to show them the great terrace and its view; and ten minutes later the little group was assembled there. Mrs. Light was extravagant in her satisfaction; Christina looked away at the Sabine mountains in silence. The Prince stood by, frowning at the raptures of the elder lady.

"This is nothing," he said at last. "My word of honour. Have you seen the terrace at San Gaetano?"

"Ah, that terrace," murmured Mrs. Light, amorously. "I suppose it is magnificent!"

"It is four hundred feet long, and paved with marble. And the view is a thousand times more beautiful than this. You see far away the blue, blue sea and the little smoke of Vesuvio!"

"Christina love," cried Mrs. Light forthwith, "the Prince has a terrace four hundred feet long, all paved with marble!"

The Cavaliere gave a little cough and began to wipe his eye-glass.

"Stupendous!" said Christina. "To go

from one end to the other the Prince must have out his golden carriage." This was apparently an allusion to one of the other items of the young man's grandeur.

"You always laugh at me," said the Prince. "I know no more what to say!"

She looked at him with a sad smile and shook her head. "No, no, dear Prince, I don't laugh at you. Heaven forbid! You are much too serious an affair. I assure you I feel your importance. What did you inform us was the value of the hereditary diamonds of the Princess Casamassima?"

"Ah, you are laughing at me yet!" said the poor young man, standing rigid and pale.

"It does not matter," Christina went on. "We have a note of it; mamma writes all those things down in a little book!"

"If you are laughed at, dear Prince, at least it's in company," said Mrs. Light caressingly; and she took his arm, as if to combat his possible displacement under the shock of her daughter's sarcasm. But the Prince

looked heavy-eyed at Rowland and Roderick, to whom the young girl was turning, as if he had much rather his lot were cast with theirs.

"Is the villa inhabited?" Christina asked, pointing to the vast melancholy structure which rises above the terrace.

"Not privately," said Roderick. "It is occupied by a Jesuits' college for little boys."

"Can women go in?"

"I am afraid not." And Roderick began to laugh. "Fancy the poor little devils looking up from their Latin declensions and seeing Miss Light shining down on them!"

"I should like to see the poor little devils, with their rosy cheeks and their long black gowns, and when they were pretty I shouldn't scruple to kiss them. But if I can't have that amusement I must have some other. We must not stand planted on this enchanting terrace as if we were stakes driven into the earth. We must dance, we must feast, we must do something picturesque. Mamma has arranged I believe that we are

to go back to Frascati to lunch at the inn. I decree that we lunch here and send the Cavaliere to the inn to get the provisions! He can take the carriage, which is waiting below."

Miss Light carried out this programme with unfaltering ardour. The Cavaliere was summoned, and he stood to receive her commands hat in hand, with his eyes cast down, as if she had been a princess addressing her major-domo. She however laid her hand with friendly grace upon his button-hole and called him a dear good old Cavaliere for being always so obliging. Her spirits had risen with the occasion and she talked irresistible nonsense. "Bring the best they have," she said, "no matter if it ruins us! And if the best is very bad it will be all the more amusing. I shall enjoy seeing Mr. Mallet try to swallow it for propriety's sake! Mr. Hudson will say out like a man that it's horrible stuff and that he'll be choked first! Be sure you bring a dish of maccaroni; the

Prince must have the diet of the Neapolitan nobility. But I leave all that to you, my poor dear Cavaliere; you know what's good! Only be sure above all you bring a guitar. Mr. Mallet will play us a tune, I will dance with Mr. Hudson, and mamma will pair off with the Prince, of whom she is so fond!"

And as she concluded her recommendations, she patted her discreet old servitor tenderly on the shoulder. He looked askance at Rowland; his little black eye glittered; it seemed to say, "Didn't I tell you she was a good girl?"

The Cavaliere returned with zealous speed, accompanied by one of the servants of the inn, laden with a basket containing the materials of a rustic luncheon. The porter of the villa was easily induced to furnish a table and half a dozen chairs, and the repast when set forth was pronounced a perfect success; not so good as to fail of the proper picturesqueness nor yet so bad as to defeat the proper function of repasts. Christina con-

tinued to display the most charming animation, and compelled Rowland to reflect privately that, think what one might of her, the harmonious gaiety of a beautiful girl was the most delightful sight in nature. Her good-humour was contagious. Roderick, who an hour before had been descanting on madness and suicide, commingled his laughter with her lightest sallies; Prince Casamassima stroked his young moustache and found a fine cool smile for everything; his neighbour Mrs. Light, who had Rowland on the other side, made the friendliest confidences to each of the young men, and the Cavaliere contributed to the general hilarity by the solemnity of his attention to his plate. As for Rowland, the spirit of kindly mirth prompted him to propose the health of this useful old gentleman. A moment later he wished he had held his tongue, for although the toast was drunk with demonstrative good-will the Cavaliere received it with various small signs of eager self-effacement which suggested to Rowland

that his diminished gentility but half relished honours which had a flavour of patronage. To perform punctiliously his mysterious duties toward the two ladies and to elude or to baffle observation on his own merits—this seemed the Cavaliere's modest programme. Rowland perceived that Mrs. Light, who was not always remarkable for tact, seemed to have divined his humour on this point. She touched her lips with her glass, but she said nothing gracious, and she immediately gave another direction to the conversation. The old man had brought no guitar, so that when the feast was over there was nothing to hold the little group together. Christina wandered away with Roderick to another part of the terrace; the Prince, whose smile had vanished, sat gnawing the head of his cane, near Mrs. Light, and Rowland strolled apart with the Cavaliere, to whom he wished to address a friendly word in compensation for the discomfort he had inflicted on his modesty. The Cavaliere was a mine of information upon all

Roman places and people; he told Rowland a number of curious anecdotes about the old Villa Mondragone. "If history could always be taught in this fashion!" thought Rowland. "It's the ideal—strolling up and down on the very spot commemorated, hearing out-of-the-way anecdotes from deeply indigenous lips." At last, as they passed, Rowland observed the mournful physiognomy of Prince Casamassima, and glancing toward the other end of the terrace saw that Roderick and Christina had disappeared from view. The young man was sitting upright in an attitude, apparently habitual, of ceremonious rigidity; but his lower jaw had fallen and was propped up with his cane, and his dull dark eye was fixed upon the angle of the villa which had just eclipsed Miss Light and her companion. His features were grotesque and his expression was vacuous; but there was a lurking delicacy in his face which seemed to tell you that nature had been making Casamassimas for a great many centuries and, though she

adapted her mould to circumstances, had learned to mix her material to an extraordinary fineness and to perform the whole operation with extreme smoothness. The Prince was stupid, Rowland suspected, but he imagined he was amiable, and he saw that at any rate he had the great quality of regarding himself in a thoroughly serious light. Rowland touched his companion's arm and pointed to the melancholy nobleman.

"Why in the world does he not go after her and insist on being noticed?" he asked.

"Oh, he's very proud!" said the Cavaliere.

"That's all very well, but a gentleman who cultivates a passion for that young lady must be prepared to make sacrifices."

"He thinks he has already made a great many. He comes of a very great family—a race of princes who for six hundred years have married none but the daughters of princes. But he is seriously in love and he would marry her to-morrow."

"And she will not have him?"

"Ah, she is very proud too!" The Cavaliere was silent a moment, as if he were measuring the propriety of frankness. He seemed to have formed a high opinion of Rowland's discretion, for he presently continued—"It would be a great match, for she brings him neither a name nor a fortune—nothing but her beauty. But the signorina will receive no favours; I know her well! She would rather have her beauty blasted than seem to care about the marriage, and if she ever accepts the Prince it will be only after he has implored her on his knees!"

"But she does care about it," said Rowland, "and to bring him to his knees she is working upon his jealousy by pretending to be interested in my friend Hudson. If you said more, you would say that, eh?"

The Cavaliere's shrewdness exchanged a glance with Rowland's. "By no means. Christina is a singular girl; she has many romantic ideas. She would be quite capable of interesting herself seriously in a remarkable

young man like your friend and doing her utmost to discourage a splendid suitor like the Prince. She would act sincerely and she would go very far. But it would be unfortunate for the remarkable young man," he added after a pause, "for at the last she would go back!"

"A singular girl indeed!"

"She would accept the more brilliant *parti*. I can answer for it."

"And what would be her motive?"

"She would be forced. There would be circumstances . . . . I can't tell you more."

"But this implies that the rejected suitor would come back to her. He might grow tired of waiting."

"Oh, this one is good! Look at him now." Rowland looked, and saw that the Prince had left his place by Mrs. Light and was marching restlessly to and fro between the villa and the parapet of the terrace. Every now and then he looked at his watch. "In this country, you know," said the Cavaliere, "a young lady

never goes walking alone with a handsome young man. It seems to him very strange."

"It must seem to him monstrous, and if he overlooks it he must be very much in love."

"Oh, he will overlook it. He is far gone."

"Who is this exemplary lover then; what is he?"

"A Neapolitan; one of the oldest houses in Italy. He is a prince in your English sense of the word, for he has a princely fortune. He is very young; he is only just of age; he saw the signorina last winter in Naples. He fell in love with her from the first, but his family interfered, and an old uncle, an ecclesiastic, Monsignor B——, hurried up to Naples, seized him and locked him up. Meantime he has passed his majority and he can dispose of himself. His relations are moving heaven and earth to prevent his marrying Miss Light, and they have sent us word that he forfeits his property if he takes his wife out of a certain line. I have investigated the question,

and I find this is but a fiction to frighten us. He is perfectly free; but the estates are such that it is no wonder they wish to keep them in their own hands. For Italy, it is an extraordinary case of unincumbered property. The Prince has been an orphan from his third year; he has therefore had a long minority and made no inroads upon his fortune. Besides, he is very prudent and orderly; I am only afraid that some day he will pull the purse-strings too tight. All these years his affairs have been in the hands of Monsignor B——, who has managed them to perfection —paid off mortgages, planted forests, opened up mines. It is now a magnificent fortune; such a fortune as with his name would justify the young man in pretending to any alliance whatsoever. And he lays it all at the feet of that young girl who is wandering in yonder *boschetto* with a penniless artist."

"He is certainly a phœnix of princes! The signora must be in a state of bliss."

The Cavaliere looked imperturbably grave.

"The signora has a high esteem for his character."

"His character, by the way," rejoined Rowland with a smile; "what sort of a character is it?"

"Eh, Prince Casamassima is a veritable prince! He is a very good young man. He is not brilliant nor witty, but he will not let himself be made a fool of. He is a faithful son of the Church—though he does propose to marry a Protestant. He will handle that point after marriage. He's as you see him there: a young man without many ideas, but with a very firm grasp of a single one—the conviction that Prince Casamassima is a very great person, that he greatly honours any young lady by asking for her hand, and that things are going very strangely when the young lady turns her back upon him. The poor young man is terribly puzzled. But I whisper to him every day, 'Pazienza, Signor Principe!'"

"So you firmly believe," said Rowland in

conclusion, "that Miss Light will accept him just in time not to lose him?"

"I count upon it. She would make too perfect a princess to miss her destiny."

"And you hold that nevertheless in the meanwhile in listening to, say, my friend Hudson she will have been acting in good faith?"

The Cavaliere lifted his shoulders a trifle, and gave an inscrutable smile. "Eh, dear signore, the Christina is very romantic!"

"So much so, you intimate, that she will eventually pivot round in consequence not of a change of sentiment, but of a mysterious outward pressure?"

"If everything else fails, there is that resource. But it is mysterious, as you say, and you needn't try to guess it. You will never know."

"The poor signorina then will suffer!"

"Not too much, I hope."

"And the remarkable young man? You maintain that there is nothing but disappoint-

ment in store for the infatuated youth who loses his heart to her?"

The Cavaliere hesitated. "He had better," he said in a moment, "go and pursue his studies in Florence. There are very fine antiques in the Uffizi!"

Rowland presently joined Mrs. Light, to whom her restless protégé had not yet returned. "That's right," she said; "sit down here; I have something serious to say to you. I am going to talk to you as a friend. I want your assistance. In fact, you *must* help me; it's your duty. Look at that unhappy young man."

"Yes," said Rowland, "he seems unhappy."

"He is just come of age, he bears one of the greatest names in Italy and owns one of the greatest properties, and he is pining away with love for my daughter."

"So the Cavaliere tells me."

"The Cavaliere shouldn't gossip," said Mrs. Light dryly. "Such information should

come from me. The Prince is pining, as I say; he's consumed, he's devoured. It's a real Italian passion; I know what that means!" And the lady gave a speaking glance, which seemed to coquet for a moment with retrospect. "Meanwhile, if you please, my daughter is hiding in the woods with your dear friend Mr. Hudson. I could cry with rage!"

"If things are as bad as that," said Rowland, "it seems to me that you should find nothing easier than to dispatch the Cavaliere to bring the guilty couple back."

"Never in the world! My hands are tied. Do you know what Christina would do? She would tell the Cavaliere to go about his business—Heaven forgive her!—and send me word that if she had a mind to she would walk in the woods till midnight. Fancy the Cavaliere coming back and delivering such a message as that before the Prince! Think of a girl wantonly making light of such a chance as hers! He would

marry her to-morrow at six o'clock in the morning?"

"It is certainly very sad," said Rowland.

"That costs you little to say! If you had left your precious young meddler to vegetate in his native village you would have saved me a world of bother!"

"Ah, you marched into the jaws of danger," said Rowland. "You came and knocked at poor Hudson's door!"

"In an evil hour! I wish to heaven you would talk with him."

"I have done my best."

"I wish then you would take him away. You have plenty of money. Do me a favour. Take him to travel. Go to the East—go to Timbuctoo. Then, when Christina is Princess Casamassima," Mrs. Light added in a moment, "he may come back if he chooses!"

"Does she really care for him?" Rowland asked abruptly.

"She thinks she does, possibly. She is a living riddle. She must needs follow out

every idea that comes into her head. Fortunately most of them don't last long; but this one may last long enough to give the Prince a fit of disgust. If that were to happen, I don't know what I should do! I should be the most miserable of women. It would be too cruel, after all I have suffered to make her what she is, to see the labour of years blighted by a caprice. For I can assure you, sir," Mrs. Light went on, "that if my daughter is the greatest beauty in the world some of the credit is mine."

Rowland promptly remarked that this was obvious. He saw that the lady's irritated nerves demanded comfort from flattering reminiscence, and he assumed designedly the attitude of a zealous auditor. She began to tell the story of her efforts, her hopes, her dreams, her presentiments, her disappointments, in this exalted cause of catching a great husband for her daughter. It was a wonderful rigmarole of strange confidences, and while it went on the Prince continued to

pass to and fro, stiffly and solemnly, like a pendulum marking the time allowed for the young lady to come to her senses. Mrs. Light evidently at an early period had gathered her maternal hopes into a sacred parcel, to which she said her prayers and burnt incense—which she treated generally as a sort of fetish. These things had been her religion; she had none other, and she performed her devotions bravely and cheerily, in the light of day. The poor old fetish had been so caressed and manipulated, so thrust in and out of its niche, so passed from hand to hand, so dressed and undressed, so mumbled and fumbled over, that it had lost by this time much of its early freshness and seemed a rather battered and disfeatured divinity. But it was still brought forth in moments of trouble to have its tinselled petticoat twisted about and be set up on its altar. Rowland observed that Mrs. Light had a real maternal conscience; she considered that she had been performing a pious duty in bringing up Christina to set her

cap for a prince; and when the future looked dark she found consolation in thinking that destiny could never have the heart to deal a blow at so deserving a person. This conscience upside down presented to Rowland's fancy a sort of physical image; he was on the point half a dozen times of laughing out.

"I don't know whether you believe in presentiments," said Mrs. Light, "and I don't care! I have had one for the last fifteen years. People have laughed at it, but they have not laughed me out of it. It has been everything to me; I couldn't have lived without it. One must believe in something! It came to me in a flash, when Christina was five years old. I remember the day and the place, as if it were yesterday. She was a very ugly baby; for the first two years I could hardly bear to look at her, and I used to spoil my own looks with crying about her. She had an Italian nurse who was very fond of her and insisted that she would grow up pretty. I couldn't believe her, I used to con-

tradict her and we were for ever squabbling. I was just a little silly in those days—surely I may say it now—and I was very fond of being amused. If my daughter was ugly, it was not that she resembled her mamma; I had no lack of amusement. People accused me I believe of neglecting my little girl; if I ever did I have made up for it since. One day I went to drive on the Pincio—I was in very low spirits. A certain person—I needn't name him—had trifled with my generous confidence. While I was there he passed me in a carriage, driving with a horrible woman who had made trouble between us. I got out of my carriage to walk about and at last sat down on a bench. I can show you the spot at this hour. While I sat there a child came wandering along the path—a little girl of four or five, very fantastically dressed, in all the colours of the rainbow. She stopped in front of me and stared at me, and I stared at her queer little dress, which was a cheap imitation of the costume of one of these *conta-*

*dine.* At last I looked up at her face and said to myself, 'Bless me, what a beautiful child! what a splendid pair of eyes, what a magnificent head of hair! If my poor little Christina were only like that!' The child turned away slowly, but looking back with its eyes fixed on me. All of a sudden I gave a cry, pounced on it, pressed it in my arms, covered it with kisses. It *was* Christina, my own precious child, so disguised by the ridiculous dress which the nurse had amused herself in making for her that her own mother had not recognised her! She knew me, but she said afterwards that she had not spoken to me because I looked so angry. Of course my face was sad! I rushed with my child to the carriage, drove home post-haste, pulled off her rags, and, as I may say, wrapped her up in cotton. I had been blind, I had been insane; she was a creature in ten millions, she was to be a beauty of beauties, a priceless treasure! Every day, after that, the certainty grew. From that time I lived

*only* for my daughter. I watched her, I fondled her from morning till night, I worshipped her. I went to see doctors about her, I took every sort of advice. I was determined she should be perfection. The things that have been done for that girl, sir —you wouldn't believe them; they would make you smile! Nothing was spared; if I had been told that she must have a bath every morning of molten pearls I would have found means to give it to her. She never raised a finger for herself, she breathed nothing but perfumes, she walked upon velvet. She never was out of my sight, and from that day to this I have never said a sharp word to her. By the time she was ten years old she was beautiful as an angel, and so noticed, wherever we went, that I had to make her wear a veil like a woman of twenty. Her hair reached down to her feet; her hands were the hands of an empress. Then I saw that she was as clever as she was beautiful and that she had only to play her

cards. She had masters, professors, every educational advantage. They told me she was a little prodigy. She speaks French, Italian, German, better than most natives. She has a wonderful genius for music, and might make her fortune as a pianist if it were not made for her otherwise! I travelled all over Europe; every one told me she was a marvel. The director of the opera in Paris saw her dance at a child's party at Spa, and offered me an enormous sum if I would give her up to him and let him have her educated for the ballet. I said, 'No I thank you sir; she is meant to be something finer than a *princesse de théâtre.*' I had a passionate belief that she might marry absolutely whom she chose, that she might be a princess out and out. I have never given it up, and I can assure you that it has sustained me in many embarrassments. Financial, some of them; I don't mind confessing it! I have raised money on that girl's face! I have taken her to the Jews and bidden her put up her veil,

and asked if the mother of that young lady was not safe! She of course was too young to understand me. And yet, as a child, you would have said she knew what was in store for her; before she could read she had the manners, the tastes, the instincts of a little aristocrat. She would have nothing to do with shabby things or shabby people; if she stained one of her frocks she was seized with a kind of frenzy—she would tear it to pieces. At Nice, at Baden, at Brighton, wherever we stayed, she used to be sent for by all the great people to play with their children. She has played at kissing-games with people who now stand on the steps of thrones! I have gone so far as to think at times that those childish kisses were a sign—a symbol—a pledge! You may laugh at me if you like, but haven't such things happened again and again without half so good a cause, and doesn't history notoriously repeat itself? There was a little Spanish girl at a second-rate English boarding-school thirty years

ago! .... The Empress certainly is a pretty woman; but what is my Christina, pray? I have dreamt of it sometimes every night for a month. I won't tell you I have been to consult those old women who advertise in the newspapers; you'll call me an old imbecile. Imbecile if you please! I have refused magnificent offers because I believed that somehow or other—if wars and revolutions were needed to bring it about—we should have nothing less than *that.* There might be another *coup d'état* somewhere and another brilliant young sovereign looking out for a wife! At last however," Mrs. Light proceeded with incomparable gravity, "since the overturning of the poor king of Naples and that charming queen, and the expulsion of all those dear little old-fashioned Italian grand-dukes, and the dreadful radical talk that is going on all over the world, it has come to seem to me that with Christina in such a position I should be really very nervous. Even in such a position she would hold her

head very high, and if anything should happen to her she would make no concessions to the popular fury. The best thing if one would be prudent seems to be a nobleman of the highest possible rank short of belonging to a reigning stock. There you see one striding up and down looking at his watch and counting the minutes till my daughter reappears!"

Rowland listened to all this with a large compassion for the heroine of the tale. What an education, what a history, what a school of character and of morals! He looked at the Prince and wondered whether he too had heard Mrs. Light's story. If he had he was a brave man. "I certainly hope you will nail him," he said to Mrs. Light. "You have played a dangerous game with your daughter; it would be a pity not to win! But there is hope for you yet; here she comes at last!"

Christina reappeared as he spoke these words, strolling beside her companion with the same indifferent tread with which she had

departed. Rowland imagined that there was a faint pink flush in her cheek which she had not carried away with her, and there was certainly a light in Roderick's eyes which he had not seen there for a week.

"Bless my soul, how they are all looking at us!" she cried as they advanced. "One would think we were prisoners of the Inquisition!" And she paused and glanced from the Prince to her mother, and from Rowland to the Cavaliere, and then threw back her head and burst into far-ringing laughter. "What is it pray? Have I been very improper? Am I ruined for ever? Dear Prince, you are looking at me as if I had committed the unpardonable sin!"

"I myself," said the Prince, "would never have ventured to ask you to walk with me alone in the country for an hour!"

"The more fool you, dear Prince, as the vulgar say! Our walk has been charming. I hope you, on your side, have enjoyed each other's society."

"My dear daughter," said Mrs. Light, taking the arm of her predestined son-in-law, "I shall have something serious to say to you when we reach home. We will go back to the carriage."

"Something serious! Decidedly, it *is* the Inquisition. Mr. Hudson, stand firm, and let us agree to make no confessions without conferring previously with each other! They may put us on the rack first. Mr. Mallet I see also," Christina added, "has something serious to say to me!"

Rowland had been looking at her with the shadow of his lately-stirred pity in his eyes. "Possibly," he said. "But it must be for some other time."

"I am at your service. I see our good-humour is gone. And I only wanted to be amiable! It is very discouraging. Cavaliere, you alone look as if you had a little of the milk of human kindness left; from your dear old stupid face, at least, there is no telling what you think. Give me your arm and take me away!"

The party took its course back to the carriage, which was waiting in the grounds of the villa, and Rowland and Roderick bade their friends farewell. Christina threw herself back in her seat and closed her eyes; a manœuvre for which Rowland imagined the Prince was grateful, as it enabled him to look at her without seeming to depart from his attitude of distinguished disapproval.

Rowland found himself aroused from sleep early the next morning, to see Roderick standing before him, dressed for departure, with his bag in his hand. "I am off," he said. "I am back to work. I have an idea. I must strike while the iron is hot! Farewell!" And he departed by the first train. Rowland went alone by the next.

## V.

Rowland went very often to the Coliseum; he was never tired of inspecting this monument. One morning about a month after his return from Frascati, as he was strolling across the vast arena, he observed a young woman seated on one of the fragments of stone which are ranged along the line of the ancient parapet. It seemed to him that he had seen her before, but he was unable to localise her face. Passing her again he perceived that one of the little red-legged French soldiers who were at that time on guard there had approached her and was gallantly making himself agreeable. She smiled brilliantly, and Rowland recognised the smile (it had always pleased him) of a certain comely Assunta who sometimes opened the door for

Mrs. Light's visitors. He wondered what she was doing alone in the Coliseum, and conjectured that Assunta had admirers as well as her young mistress, but that being without the same domiciliary conveniences she was using this massive heritage of her Latin ancestors as a boudoir. In other words, she had an appointment with her lover, who would do well from present appearances to be punctual. It was a long time since Rowland had ascended to the ruinous upper tiers of the great circus, and as the day was radiant and the distant views promised to be particularly clear he determined to give himself this pleasure. The custodian unlocked the great wooden wicket, and he climbed through the winding shafts where the eager Roman crowds had billowed and trampled, not pausing till he reached the highest accessible point of the ruin. The views were as fine as he had supposed; the lights on the Sabine mountains had never been more lovely. He gazed to his satisfaction and retraced his steps. In a

moment he paused again on an abutment somewhat lower, from which the glance dropped dizzily into the interior. There are accidents of ruggedness in the upper portions of the Coliseum which offer a very fair imitation of the mighty excrescences in the face of an Alpine cliff. In those days a multitude of delicate flowers and sprays of wild herbage had found a friendly soil in the hoary crevices, and they bloomed and nodded amid the antique masonry as naturally as if it were the boulders of a mountain. Rowland was turning away when he heard a sound of voices rising up from below. He had but to step slightly forward to find himself overlooking two persons who had seated themselves on a narrow ledge in a sunny corner. They had apparently had an eye to extreme privacy, but they had not observed that their position was commanded by the abutment on which Rowland stood. One of these airy adventurers was a lady, thickly veiled, so that even if he had not been placed directly above her

Rowland could not have seen her face. The other was a young man whose face was also invisible, but who presently gave a toss of his clustering locks which was equivalent to a master's signature. A moment's reflection satisfied him of the identity of the lady. He had been unjust to poor Assunta, sitting patient in the gloomy arena; she had not come on her own errand. Rowland's discoveries made him hesitate. Should he retire as noiselessly as possible, or should he call out a friendly good morning? While he was debating the question he found himself hearing his friend's words. They were of such a nature as to make him unwilling to retreat and yet to make it awkward to be discovered in a position where it would be apparent that he had been an auditor.

"If what you say is true," said Christina with her usual soft deliberateness—it made her words rise with peculiar distinctness to Rowland's ear—"you are simply weak. I am sorry! I hoped—I really believed—you were not."

"No, I am not weak," answered Roderick with vehemence; "I maintain that I am not weak! I am incomplete perhaps; but I can't help that. Weakness is a man's own fault!"

"Incomplete then!" said Christina with a laugh. "It's the same thing, so long as it keeps you from splendid achievement. Is it written then that I shall really never know what I have so often dreamed of?"

"What have you dreamed of?"

"A man whom I can perfectly respect!" cried the young girl with a sudden flame. "A man whom I can unrestrictedly admire! I meet one, as I have met more than one before, whom I fondly believe to be cast in a larger mould than most of the vulgar human breed—to be large in character, great in talent, strong in will! In such a man as that, I say, one's weary imagination at last may rest; or it may wander if it will, yet never need to wander far from the deeps where one's heart is anchored. When I first knew you I gave no sign, but you had struck me.

I observed you as women observe, and I fancied you had the sacred fire."

"Before heaven I believe I have!" cried Roderick.

"Ah, but so little! It flickers and trembles and sputters; it goes out, you tell me, for whole weeks together. From your own account it's highly probable that you are a failure."

"I say those things sometimes myself, but when I hear you say them they make me feel as if I could do all sorts of great things."

"Ah, the man who is strong with what I call strength," Christina replied, "would neither rise nor fall by anything I could say! I am a poor weak woman; I have no strength myself and I can give no strength. I am a miserable medley of vanity and folly. I am silly, I am ignorant, I am affected, I am false. I am the fruit of a horrible education sown on a worthless soil. I am all that, and yet I believe I have one merit! I should know a great character when I saw it, and I should delight in it with a generosity which would do something

toward the remission of my sins. For a man who should really give me a certain feeling—I have never had it, but I should know it when it came—I would send Prince Casamassima and his millions to perdition. I don't know what you think of me for saying all this; I suppose we have not climbed up here under the skies to play propriety. Why have you been at such pains to assure me after all that you are a little man and not a great one, a weak one and not a strong? I innocently imagined that your eyes declared you were strong. But your voice condemns you; I always wondered at it; it's not the voice of a conqueror!"

"Give me something to conquer," cried Roderick, "and when I say that I thank you from my soul, my voice, whatever you think of it, shall speak the truth!"

Christina for a moment said nothing. Rowland was too interested to think of moving. "You pretend to such devotion," she went on, "and yet I am sure you have never really

chosen between me and that person in America."

"Do me the favour not to speak of her," said Roderick imploringly.

"Why not? I say no ill of her, and I think all kinds of good. I am certain she is a far better girl than I, and far more likely to make you happy."

"This is happiness, this present palpable moment," said Roderick; "though you *have* such a genius for saying the things that torture me!"

"It's greater happiness than you deserve then! You have never chosen, I say; you have been afraid to choose. You have never really looked in the face the fact that you are false, that you have broken your faith. You have never looked at it and seen that it was hideous, and yet said, 'No matter, I will brave the penalty, I will bear the shame!' You have closed your eyes; you have tried to stifle remembrance, to persuade yourself that you were not behaving so badly as you seemed to

be. that there would be some way after all of doing what you liked and yet escaping trouble. You have faltered and drifted, you have gone on from accident to accident, and I am sure that at this present moment you can't tell what it is you really desire!"

Roderick was sitting with his knees drawn up and bent and his hands clasped round his legs. He bent his head and rested his forehead on his knees.

Christina went on with a sort of infernal calmness. "I believe that really you don't greatly care for your friend in America any more than you do for me! You are one of the men who care only for themselves and for what they can make of themselves. That's very well when they can make something great, and I could interest myself in a man of extraordinary power who should wish to turn all his passions to account. But if the power should turn out to be after all rather ordinary? Fancy feeling one's self ground in the mill of a third-rate talent! If you

have doubts about yourself I can't reassure you; I have too many doubts myself about everything in this weary world. You have gone up like a rocket in your profession they tell me; are you going to come down like the stick? I don't pretend to know; I repeat frankly what I have said before—that all modern sculpture seems to me vulgar, and that the only things I care for are some of the most battered of the antiques of the Vatican. No, no, I can't reassure you; and when you tell me—with a confidence in my discretion of which certainly I am duly sensible—that at times you feel terribly small, why, I can only answer, 'Ah then, my poor friend, I am afraid you are small!' The language I should like to hear, from a certain person, would be the language of absolute decision."

Roderick raised his head, but he said nothing; he seemed to be exchanging a long glance with his companion. The result of it was to make him fling himself back with an

inarticulate murmur. Rowland, admonished by the silence, was on the point of turning away, but he was arrested by a gesture of the young girl. She pointed for a moment into the blue air. Roderick followed the direction of her gesture.

"Is that little flower we see outlined against that dark niche," she asked, "as intensely blue as it looks through my veil?" She spoke apparently with the amiable design of directing the conversation into a less painful channel.

Rowland, from where he stood, could see the flower she meant—a delicate plant of radiant hue, which sprouted from the top of an immense fragment of wall some twenty feet from Christina's place.

Roderick turned his head and looked at it without answering. At last, glancing round, "Put up your veil!" he said. Christina complied. "Does it look as blue now?" he asked.

"Ah, what a lovely colour!" she murmured, leaning her head on one side.

"Should you like to have it?"

She stared a moment and then broke into a loud laugh.

"Should you like to have it?" he repeated in a ringing voice.

"Don't look as if you would eat me up," she answered. "It's harmless if I say yes!"

Roderick rose to his feet and stood looking at the little flower. It was separated from the ledge on which he stood by a rugged surface of vertical wall, which dropped straight into the dusky vaults behind the arena. Suddenly he took off his hat and flung it behind him. Christina then sprang to her feet.

"I will bring it to you," he said.

She seized his arm. "Are you crazy? Do you mean to kill yourself?"

"I shall not kill myself. Sit down!"

"Excuse me. Not till you do!" and she grasped his arm with both hands.

Roderick shook her off and pointed with a

violent gesture to her former place. "Go there!" he cried fiercely.

"You can never, never!" she murmured beseechingly, clasping her hands. "I implore you!"

Roderick turned and looked at her, and then in a voice which Rowland had never heard him use, a voice almost thunderous, a voice which awakened the echoes of the mighty ruin, he repeated, "Sit down!" She hesitated a moment, and then she dropped on the ground and buried her face in her hands.

Roderick had seen all this, and he saw what followed. He saw Roderick clasp in his left arm the jagged corner of the vertical partition on which he proposed to try his experiment, then stretch out his leg and feel for a resting-place for his foot. Rowland had measured with a glance the possibility of his holding on and pronounced it uncommonly small. The wall was garnished with a series of narrow projections, the remains apparently of a brick cornice supporting the arch of a

vault which had long since collapsed. It was by lodging his toes on these loose brackets and grasping with his hands at certain mouldering protuberances on a level with his head that Roderick intended to proceed. The relics of the cornice were utterly worthless as a support. Rowland had observed this, and yet for a moment he had hesitated. If the thing were possible he felt a sudden admiring glee at the thought of Roderick's doing it. It would be finely done, it would be gallant, it would have a sort of masculine eloquence as an answer to Christina's sinister persiflage. But it was not possible! Rowland left his place with a bound and scrambled down some neighbouring steps, and the next moment a stronger pair of hands than Christina's were laid upon Roderick's shoulder.

He turned, staring, pale and angry. Christina rose, pale and staring too, but beautiful in her wonder and alarm. "My dear Roderick," said Rowland, "I am only preventing

you from doing a very foolish thing. That's an exploit for spiders, not for young sculptors of promise."

Roderick wiped his forehead, looked back at the wall, and then closed his eyes, as if with a spasm of retarded dizziness. "I won't resist you," he said. "But I have made you obey," he added, turning to Christina. "Am I weak now?"

She had recovered her composure; she looked straight past him and addressed Rowland. "Be so good as to show me the way out of this horrible place!"

He helped her back into the corridor; Roderick followed after a short interval. Of course, as they were descending the steps, came questions for Rowland to answer, and more or less surprise. Where had he come from? how happened he to have appeared at just that moment? Rowland answered that he had been rambling overhead and that, looking out of an aperture, he had seen a gentleman preparing to undertake a prepos-

terous gymnastic feat and a lady swooning away in consequence. Interference seemed justifiable and he had made it as prompt as possible. Roderick was far from hanging his head like a man who has been caught in the perpetration of an extravagant folly; but if he held it more erect than usual Rowland believed that this was much less because he had made a show of personal daring than because he had triumphantly proved to Christina that like a certain person she had dreamed of he too could speak the language of decision. Christina descended to the arena in silence, apparently occupied with her own thoughts. She betrayed no sense of the privacy of her interview with Roderick needing an explanation; she seemed to imply that Rowland had seen stranger things in New York. The only evidence of her recent agitation was that on being joined by her maid she declared that she was unable to walk home—she must have a carriage. A fiacre was found resting in the shadow of the Arch of Constantine, and

Rowland suspected that after she had got into it she disburdened herself under her veil of a few natural tears.

Rowland had played eavesdropper to so good a purpose that he might justly have omitted the ceremony of denouncing himself to Roderick. He preferred however to let him know that he had overheard a portion of his talk with Christina.

"Of course it seems to you," Roderick said, "a proof that I am thoroughly infatuated."

"Miss Light seemed to me to know very well how far she could go," Rowland answered. "She was twisting you round her finger. I don't think she exactly meant to defy you; but your preposterous attempt to pluck the flower was a proof that she could go all lengths in the way of making a fool of you."

"Yes," said Roderick, meditatively; "she is making a fool of me."

"And what do you expect to come of it?"

"Nothing good!" And Roderick put his hands into his pockets and looked as if he

had announced the most colourless fact in the world.

"And in the light of your late interview, what do you make of your young lady?"

"If I could tell you that, it would be plain sailing. But she will not tell me again I am weak!"

"Are you very sure you are not weak?"

"I may be, but she shall never dare—she shall never care—to say it!"

Rowland said no more until they reached the Corso, when he asked his companion whether he were going to his studio.

Roderick started out of a reverie and passed his hands over his eyes. "Oh no, I can't settle down to work after such a scene as that. I was not afraid of breaking my neck then, but I feel in a devil of a tremor now. I will go—I will go and sit in the sun on the Pincio!"

"Promise me this first," said Rowland very solemnly—"that the next time you meet Miss Light it shall be on the earth and not in the air!"

Since his return from Frascati Roderick had been working doggedly at the statue ordered by Mr. Leavenworth. To Rowland's eye he had made a very fair beginning, but he had himself insisted from the first that he liked neither his subject nor his patron and that it was impossible to feel any warmth of interest in a work which was to be incorporated into the ponderous personality of Mr. Leavenworth. It was all against the grain; he wrought without love. Nevertheless after a fashion he wrought, and the figure grew beneath his hands. Miss Blanchard's friend was ordering works of art on every side, and his purveyors were in many cases persons whom Roderick declared it was an infamy to be associated with. There had been famous tailors, he said, who declined to make you a coat unless you should get the hat you were to wear with it from an artist of their own choosing. It seemed to him that he had an equal right to exact that his statue should not form part of the same system of ornament

as the "Pearl of Perugia," a picture by an American *confrère* who had in Mr. Leavenworth's opinion a prodigious eye for colour. As a liberal customer, Mr. Leavenworth used to drop into Roderick's studio to see how things were getting on and give a friendly hint or exert an enlightened control. He would seat himself squarely, plant his gold-topped cane between his legs, which he held very much apart, rest his large white hands on the head, and enunciate the principles of spiritual art—a species of fluid wisdom which appeared to rise in bucketfuls, as he turned the crank, from the well-like depths of his moral consciousness. His benignant and imperturbable pomposity gave Roderick the sense of suffocating beneath an immense feather-bed, and the worst of the matter was that the good gentleman's placid vanity had an integument impenetrable to sarcastic shafts. Roderick admitted that in thinking over the tribulations of struggling genius the danger of dying of too much attention had never occurred to him.

The deterring effect of the episode of the Coliseum was apparently of long continuance; if Roderick's nerves had been shaken his hand needed time to recover its steadiness. He cultivated composure upon principles of his own; by frequenting entertainments from which he returned at four o'clock in the morning and lapsing into habits which might fairly be called irregular. He had hitherto made few friends among the artistic fraternity; chiefly because he had taken no trouble about it and there was in his demeanour an elastic independence of the favour of his fellow-mortals which made social advances on his own part peculiarly necessary. Rowland had told him more than once that he ought to fraternise a trifle more with the other artists, and he had always answered that he had not the smallest objection to fraternising: let them come! But they came on rare occasions, and Roderick was not punctilious about returning their visits. He declared there was not one of them the fruits of whose genius

gave him the least desire to delve in the parent soil. For Gloriani he professed an ineffable contempt, and having been once to look at his wares never crossed his threshold again. The only one of the fraternity for whom by his own admission he cared a straw was little Singleton; but he took an exclusively facetious view of this humble genius whenever he encountered him, and quite forgot his existence in the intervals. He had never been to see him, but Singleton edged his way from time to time timidly into Roderick's studio and agreed with characteristic modesty that brilliant fellows like Hudson might consent to receive homage but could hardly be expected to render it. Roderick never acknowledged applause and apparently failed to observe whether poor Singleton spoke in admiration or in blame. Roderick's taste as to companions was singularly capricious. There were very good fellows that were disposed to cultivate him who bored him to death; and there were others in whom even Rowland's good-nature was unable

to discover a pretext for tolerance in whom he appeared to find the highest social qualities. He gave the most fantastic reasons for his likes and dislikes. He would declare he could not speak a civil word to a man who brushed his hair in a certain fashion, and he would explain his unaccountable fancy for an individual of imperceptible merit by telling you that he had an ancestor who in the thirteenth century had walled up his wife alive. "I like to talk to a man whose ancestor has walled up his wife alive," he would say. "You may not see the fun of it, and think poor P—— is a very dull fellow. It's very possible; I don't ask you to admire him. But for reasons of my own I like to see him about. The old fellow left her for three days with her face uncovered and placed a looking-glass opposite to her, so that she could see, as he said, if her gown was a fit!"

His relish for an odd flavour in his friends had led him to make the acquaintance of a number of people outside of Rowland's well-

ordered circle, and he made no secret of their being very queer fish. He formed an intimacy, among others, with a crazy fellow who had come to Rome as an emissary of one of the Central American republics, to drive some ecclesiastical bargain with the papal government. The Pope had given him the cold shoulder, but since he had not prospered as a diplomatist he had sought compensation as a man of the world, and his great flamboyant curricle and negro lackeys were for several weeks one of the striking ornaments of the Pincian. He spoke a queer jargon of Italian, Spanish, French, and English, humorously relieved with scraps of ecclesiastical Latin, and to those who inquired of Roderick what he found to interest him in this pretentious jackanapes, the latter would reply, looking at his interlocutor with his lucid blue eyes, that it was worth any sacrifice to hear him talk nonsense! The two had gone together one night to a ball given by a lady of some renown in the Spanish

colony, and very late, on his way home, Roderick came up to Rowland's rooms, in the windows of which he had seen a light. Rowland was going to bed, but Roderick flung himself into an arm-chair and chattered for an hour. The friends of the Costa Rican envoy were as amusing as himself, and in very much the same line. The mistress of the house had worn a yellow satin dress and gold heels on her slippers, and at the close of the entertainment had sent for a pair of castanets, tucked up her petticoats and danced a fandango, while the gentlemen sat cross-legged on the floor. "It was awfully low," Roderick said; "all of a sudden I perceived it and bolted. Nothing of that kind ever amuses me to the end; before it's half over it bores me to death; it makes me sick. Hang it, why can't a poor fellow enjoy things in peace? My illusions are all broken-winded; they won't carry me twenty paces! I can't laugh and forget; my laugh dies away before it begins. Your friend Stendhal

writes on his book-covers (I never got further) that he has seen too early in life *la beauté parfaite.* I don't know how early he saw it; I saw it before I was born—in another state of being! I can't describe it positively; I can only say I don't find it anywhere now. Not at the bottom of champagne glasses; not, strange as it may seem, in that extra half-yard or so of shoulder that some women have their ball-dresses cut to expose. I don't find it at noisy supper-tables where half a dozen ugly men with pomatumed heads are rapidly growing uglier still with heat and wine; nor when I come away and walk through these squalid black streets and go out into the Forum and see a few old battered stone posts standing there like gnawed bones stuck into the earth. Everything is mean and dusky and shabby, and the men and women who make up this so-called brilliant society are the meanest and shabbiest of all. They have no real spontaneity; they are nothing but parrots and popinjays. They

have no more dignity than so many grass-hoppers. Nothing is good but one!" And he jumped up and stood looking at one of his statues, which shone vaguely across the room in the dim lamplight.

"Yes, do tell us," said Rowland, "what to hold on by!"

"Those things of mine were tolerably good," he answered. "But my idea was better—and that's what I mean!"

Rowland said nothing. He was willing to wait for Roderick to complete the circle of his metamorphoses, but he had no desire to officiate as chorus to the play.

"You think I have the 'cheek' of the devil himself," the latter said at last, "coming up to moralise at this hour of the night! You think I want to throw dust into your eyes, to put you off the scent. That's your eminently rational view of the case."

"Excuse me from taking any view at all," said Rowland.

"You have given me up, then?"

"No, I have merely suspended judgment. I am waiting."

Roderick looked at him a moment. "What are you waiting for?"

Rowland made an angry gesture. "Oh, miserable boy! When you have hit your mark and made people care for you, you shouldn't twist your weapon about at that rate in their vitals. Allow me to say I am sleepy. Good night!"

## VI.

Some days afterwards it happened that Rowland, on a long afternoon ramble, took his way through one of the quiet corners of the Trastevere. He was particularly fond of this part of Rome, though he could hardly have expressed the charm he found in it. As you pass away from the dusky swarming purlieus of the Ghetto, you emerge into a region of empty, soundless, grass-grown lanes and alleys, where the shabby houses seem mouldering away in disuse and yet your footstep brings figures of startling Roman type to the doorways. There are few monuments here, but no part of Rome seemed more historic, in the sense of being weighted with a ponderous past, blighted with the melancholy of things that had had their day.

When the yellow afternoon sunshine slept on the sallow battered walls and lengthened the shadows in the grassy courtyards of small closed churches the place acquired a strange fascination. The church of Saint Cecilia has one of these sunny waste-looking courts; the edifice seems abandoned to silence and the charity of chance devotion. Rowland never passed it without going in, and he was generally the only visitor. He entered it now, but he found that two persons had preceded him. Both were women. One was at her prayers at one of the side-altars; the other was seated against a column at the upper end of the nave. Rowland walked to the altar and paid in a momentary glance at the clever statue of the saint in death in the niche beneath it the usual tribute to the charm of polished ingenuity. As he turned away he looked at the person seated and recognised Christina Light. Seeing that she perceived him he advanced to speak to her.

She was sitting in a listless attitude, with

her hands in her lap; she seemed to be tired. She was dressed very simply, as if for walking and escaping observation. When he had greeted her he glanced back at her companion and recognised the faithful Assunta.

Christina smiled. "Are you looking for Mr. Hudson? He is not here I am happy to say."

"If he were here one might understand," said Rowland. "This is a strange place to find you alone."

"Not at all! People call me a strange girl, and I might as well have the comfort of it. I came to take a walk; that by the way is part of my strangeness. I can't loll all the morning on a sofa and sit perched all the afternoon in a carriage. I get horribly restless; I must move; I must do something and see something. Mamma suggests a cup of tea. Meanwhile I put on an old dress and half a dozen veils, I take Assunta under my arm and we start on a pedestrian tour. It's a bore that I can't take the poodle, but he

attracts attention. We trudge about everywhere; there is nothing I like so much. I hope you will congratulate me on the simplicity of my tastes."

"I congratulate you on your wisdom. To live in Rome and not to walk about would, I think, be poor pleasure. But you are terribly far from home, and I am afraid you are tired."

"A little—enough to sit here a while."

"Might I offer you my company while you rest?"

"If you will promise to amuse me. I am in dismal spirits."

Saying he would do what he could, Rowland brought a chair and placed it near her. He was not in love with her; he disapproved of her; he distrusted her; and yet he felt it a kind of privilege to watch her and he found a peculiar excitement in talking to her. The background of her nature, as he would have called it, was large and mysterious, and it emitted strange fantastic gleams and flashes.

Watching for these rather quickened one's pulses. Moreover it was not a disadvantage to talk to a girl who made one keep guard on one's composure; it diminished one's usual liability to utter something less than revised wisdom.

Assunta had risen from her prayers, and as he took his place was coming back to her mistress. But Christina motioned her away. "No, no; while you are about it say a few dozen more!" she said. "Pray for *me*," she added in English. "Pray that I say nothing silly. She has been at it half an hour; I envy her volubility!"

"One often envies good Catholics," said Rowland.

"Oh, speak to me of that; I have been through that too! There was a time when I wanted immensely to be a nun; it was not a laughing matter. It was when I was about sixteen years old. I read the 'Imitation' and the 'Life of Saint Catherine.' I fully believed in the miracles of the saints, and I was dying

to have one of my own—little of a saint as I was! The least little accident that could have been twisted into a miracle would have carried me straight into the cloister. I had the real religious passion. It passed away, and as I sat here just now I was wondering what has become of it!"

Rowland had already been sensible of something in this young lady's tone which he would have called a want of veracity, and this epitome of her religious experience failed to strike him as absolutely historical. But the trait was not disagreeable, for she herself was evidently the foremost dupe of her inventions. She had a fictitious history in which she believed much more fondly than in her real one, and an infinite capacity for extemporised reminiscence adapted to the mood of the hour. She liked to idealise herself, to take interesting and picturesque attitudes to her own imagination; and the vivacity and spontaneity of her character gave her really a starting-point in experience, so that the many-

coloured flowers of fiction which blossomed in her talk were not so much perversions as sympathetic exaggerations of fact. And Rowland felt that whatever she said of herself might have been, under the imagined circumstances; energy was there, audacity, the restless questioning temperament. "I am afraid I am sadly prosaic," he said, "for in these many months now that I have been in Rome I have never ceased for a moment to look at Catholicism simply from the outside. I don't see an opening as big as your finger-nail where I could creep into it!"

"What do you believe?" asked Christina, looking at him. "Are you religious?"

"I am very old-fashioned. I believe in God."

Christina let her beautiful eyes wander a while and then gave a little sigh. "You are much to be envied!"

"You, I imagine, in that line have nothing to envy me."

"Yes I have. Rest!"

"You are too young to say that."

"I am not young; I have never been young! My mother took care of that. I was a little wrinkled old woman at ten."

"I am afraid," said Rowland, in a moment, "that you are fond of painting yourself in dark colours."

She looked at him a while in silence. "Do you wish to win my eternal gratitude? Prove to me that I am better than I suppose."

"I should have first to know what you really suppose."

She shook her head. "It wouldn't do! You would be horrified to learn even the things I imagine about myself, and shocked at the knowledge of evil displayed in my very mistakes."

"Well, then," said Rowland, "I will ask no questions. But, at a venture, I promise you to catch you some day in the act of doing something very good."

"Are you too trying to flatter me? I thought you and I had fallen from the first into rather a truth-speaking vein."

"Oh, I have not given it up!" said Rowland; and he determined, since he had the credit of homely directness, to push his advantage farther. The opportunity seemed excellent. But while he was hesitating how to begin, the young girl said, bending forward and clasping her hands in her lap, "Please tell me about your religion."

"Tell you about it? I can't!" said Rowland, with a good deal of emphasis.

She flushed a little. "Is it such a mighty mystery it cannot be put into words nor communicated to my base ears?"

"It is simply a sentiment that makes part of my life, and I can't detach myself from it sufficiently to talk about it."

"Religion, it seems to me, should be eloquent and aggressive. It should wish to make converts, to persuade and illumine, to take possession!"

"One's religion takes the colour of one's general disposition. I am not aggressive, and certainly I am not eloquent."

"Well, I am sure I shouldn't greatly care for anything you might say," Christina rejoined. "It would be sure to be half-hearted. You are not in the least contented."

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, I am an observer!"

"No one is absolutely contented, I suppose —but I assure you I complain of nothing."

"So much the worse for your honesty! To begin with, you are in love."

"You would not have me complain of that!"

"And it doesn't go well. There are grievous obstacles. So much I know! You needn't protest; I ask no questions. You will tell no one—me least of all. Why does one never see you?"

"Why, if I came to see you," said Rowland, deliberating, "it wouldn't be, it couldn't be, for a trivial reason—because I had not been in a month, because I was passing, because I admire you. It would be because I should have something very particular to say.

I have not come because I have been slow in making up my mind to say it."

"You are simply cruel. Something particular, in this ocean of inanities? In common charity, speak!"

"I doubt whether you will like it."

"Oh, I hope to heaven it's not some tribute to my charms!"

"It may be called a tribute to your reasonableness. That is one of your charms, you know. You perhaps remember that I gave you a hint of it the other day at Frascati."

"Has it been hanging fire all this time? Explode! I promise not to stop my ears."

"It relates to my friend Hudson." And Rowland paused. She was looking at him expectantly; her face gave no sign. "I am rather disturbed in mind about him. He seems to me at times to be in a discouraging way." He paused again, but Christina said nothing. "The case is simply this," he went on. "It was by my advice he gave up his work at home and went in for an artist's life.

I made him burn his ships. I brought him to Rome, I launched him in the world, and I have undertaken to answer to—to his mother for his doing well. It is not such smooth sailing as it might be, and I am inclined to put up prayers for fair winds. If he is to succeed, he must work—very quietly and very hard. It is not news to you I imagine that Hudson is a great admirer of yours."

Christina remained silent; she turned away her eyes with an air, not of confusion, but of deep deliberation. Surprising frankness had as a general thing struck Rowland as the key-note of her character, but she had more than once given him a suggestion of an unfathomable power of calculation, and her silence now had something which it is hardly extravagant to call portentous. He had of course asked himself how far it was questionable taste to inform an unprotected girl, for the needs of a cause, that another man admired her; the thing superficially had an uncomfortable analogy with treating the

young lady as a catspaw. But he decided that even rigid discretion is not bound to take such a person at more than her own valuation, and Christina presently reassured him as to the limits of her susceptibility. "Mr. Hudson is in love with me!" she said.

Rowland flinched a trifle. Then—"Am I," he asked, "from this point of view of mine, to be glad or sorry?"

"I don't understand you."

"Why, is Hudson to be happy or unhappy?"

She hesitated a moment. "You wish him to be great in his profession? And for that you consider that he must be happy in his life?"

"Decidedly. I don't say it's a general rule, but I think it's a rule for him."

"So that if he were very happy he would become very great?"

"He would at least do himself justice."

"And by that you mean a great deal?"

"A great deal."

Christina sank back in her chair and rested her eyes on the cracked and polished slabs of the pavement. At last, looking up, "You have not forgotten, I suppose, that you told me he was engaged to be married?"

"By no means."

"He is still engaged then?"

"To the best of my belief."

"And yet you desire that, as you say, he should be made happy by something I can do for him?"

"What I desire is this. That your great influence with him should be exerted for his good, that it should help him and not retard him. Understand me. You probably know that your admirers have rather a restless time of it. I can answer for two of them. You don't know your own mind very well, I imagine, and as you like being admired, the poor devil on whom you have cast your spell has to pay all the expenses! Since we are really being frank, I wonder whether I might not say the great word."

"You need'nt; I know it. I am a horrible coquette."

"No, not a horrible one, since I am making an appeal to your generosity. I am pretty sure you can't imagine yourself marrying my friend."

"There's nothing I can't imagine! That is my difficulty!"

Rowland's brow contracted impatiently. "I can't imagine it then!"

Christina flushed faintly; then very gently —"I am not so bad as you think," she said.

"It is not a question of badness; it is a question of whether circumstances don't make the thing an extreme improbability."

"Worse and worse. I can be bullied, then, or bribed?"

"Yon are not so candid as you pretend to be. My feeling is this. Hudson, as I understand him, does not need, as an artist, the stimulus of strong emotion, of passion. He is better without it; he is emotional and passionate enough when he is left to himself.

The sooner passion is at rest therefore the sooner he will settle down to work, and the fewer emotions he has that are mere emotions and nothing more, the better for him. If you cared for him enough to marry him, I should have nothing to say; I should never venture to interfere. But I strongly suspect you don't, and therefore I suggest most respectfully that you leave him alone."

"If I leave him alone he will go on like a new clock, eh?"

"He will do better. He will have no excuses or pretexts."

"Oh, he makes me a pretext, does he? I am much obliged!" cried Christina with a laugh. "What is he doing now?"

"I can hardly say. He's like a very old clock indeed. He's moody, desultory, idle, irregular, fantastic."

"Heavens, what a list! And it's all poor me?"

"No, not all. But you are a part of it, and I turn to you because you are a more tangible,

sensible, responsible cause than the other things."

Christina raised her hand to her eyes, and bent her head thoughtfully. Rowland was puzzled to measure the effect of his venture; she rather surprised him by her gentleness. At last, without moving, "If I were to marry him," she asked, "what would have become of his *fiancée?*"

"I am bound to suppose that she would have become extremely unhappy."

Christina said nothing more, and Rowland, to let her make her reflections, left his place and strolled away. Poor Assunta, sitting patiently on a stone bench and unprovided on this occasion with military consolation, gave him a bright frank smile which might have been construed as an expression of regret for herself and of sympathy for her mistress. Rowland presently seated himself again near Christina.

"What do you think of your friend's infidelity to that young girl in the little

village?" she asked suddenly, looking at him.

"I don't like it."

"Was he very much in love with her?"

"He asked her to marry him. You may judge."

"Is she rich?"

"No, she is poor."

"Is she very much in love with him?"

"I know her too little to say."

She paused again, and then resumed—"You have settled in your mind then that I will never seriously listen to him?"

"I shall think it unlikely until the contrary is proved."

"How shall it be proved? How do you know what passes between us?"

"I can judge of course but from appearances; but, like you, I am an observer. Hudson has not at all the air of a happy lover!"

"If he is depressed there is a reason. He has a bad conscience. One must hope so at least. On the other hand simply as a friend,"

she continued gently, "you think I can do him no good?"

The humility of her tone combined with her beauty as she made this remark was inexpressibly touching, and Rowland had an uncomfortable sense of being put at a disadvantage. "There are doubtless many good things you might do if you had proper opportunity," he said. "But you seem to be sailing with a current which leaves you little leisure for quiet benevolence. You live in the whirl and hurry of a world into which a poor artist can hardly find it to his advantage to follow you."

"In plain English I am odiously frivolous. You put it very generously."

"I won't hesitate to say all my thought," said Rowland. "For better or worse you seem to me to belong both by character and by circumstance to what is called the world, the great world. You are made to ornament it magnificently. You are not made to be an artist's wife."

"I see. But even from your point of view that would depend upon the artist. Extraordinary talent might make him a member of the great world."

Rowland smiled. "That is very true."

"If, as it is," Christina continued in a moment, "you take a low view of me—no, you needn't protest—I wonder what you would think if you knew certain things."

"What things do you mean?"

"Well for example how I was brought up. I have had a horrible education. There must be some good in me, since I have perceived it, since I have turned and judged my circumstances."

"My dear Miss Light!" Rowland murmured remonstrantly.

She gave a little quick laugh. "You don't want to hear! you don't want to have to think about that!"

"Have I a right to? You needn't justify yourself."

She turned upon him a moment the quick-

ened light of her beautiful eyes, then fell to musing again. "Is there not some novel or some play," she asked at last, "in which a beautiful wicked woman who has ensnared a young man sees his father come to her and beg her to let him go?"

"Very likely," said Rowland. "I hope she consents."

"I forget. But tell me," she continued, "shall you consider—admitting your proposition—that in ceasing to be nice to Mr. Hudson, so that he may go about his business, I do something magnanimous, heroic, sublime—something with a fine name like that?"

Rowland, elated with the prospect of gaining his point, was about to reply that she would deserve the finest name in the world; but he instantly suspected that this tone would not please her, and besides it would not express his meaning.

"You do something I shall greatly respect," he contented himself with saying.

She made no answer, and in a moment she

beckoned to her maid. "What have I to do to-day?" she asked.

Assunta meditated. "Eh, it's a very busy day! Fortunately I have a better memory than the signorina," she said, turning to Rowland. She began to count on her fingers, "We have to go to the Piè di Marmo to see about those laces that were sent to be washed. You said also that you wished to say three sharp words to the Buonvicini about your pink dress. You want some moss-rosebuds for to-night, and you won't get them for nothing! You dine at the Austrian Embassy, and that Frenchman is to powder your hair. You're to come home in time to receive, for the signora gives a dance. And so away, away till morning!"

"Ah, yes, the moss-roses!" Christina murmured appreciatively. "I must have a quantity—at least a hundred. Nothing but buds, eh? You must sew them in a kind of immense apron, down the front of my dress. Packed tight together, eh? It will be de-

lightfully barbarous. And then twenty more or so for my hair. They go very well with powder; don't you think so?" And she turned to Rowland. "I am going *en Pompadour*."

"Going where?"

"To the Spanish Embassy, or whatever it is."

"All down the front, signorina? *Dio buono!* You must give me time!" Assunta cried.

"Yes, we will go!" And she left her place. She walked slowly to the door of the church, looking at the pavement, and Rowland could not guess whether she was thinking of her apron of moss-rosebuds or of her opportunity for moral sublimity. Before reaching the door she turned away and stood gazing at an old picture, indistinguishable with blackness, over an altar. At last they passed out into the court. Glancing at her in the open air, Rowland was startled; he thought he saw the traces of hastily suppressed tears. They had lost time, she said,

and they must hurry; she sent Assunta to look for a coach. She remained silent a while, scratching the ground with the point of her parasol, and then at last looking up she thanked Rowland for his confidence in her "reasonableness." "It's really very comfortable to be expected to do something good, after all the horrid things one has been used to doing—instructed, commanded, forced to do! I will think over what you have said to me." In that deserted quarter coaches are rare, and there was some delay in Assunta's procuring one. Christina talked of the church, of the picturesque old court, of that strange decaying corner of Rome. Rowland was perplexed; he was ill at ease. At last the cab arrived, but she waited a moment longer. "So, decidedly," she suddenly asked, "I can only harm him?"

"You make me feel very brutal," said Rowland.

"And he is such a fine fellow that it would be really a great pity, eh?"

"I shall praise him no more," Rowland said.

She turned away quickly, but she lingered still. "Do you remember promising me, soon after we first met, that at the end of six months you would tell me definitely what you thought of me?"

"It was a foolish promise."

"You gave it. Bear it in mind. I will think of what you have said to me. Farewell." The two women stepped into the carriage and it rolled away. Rowland stood for some minutes looking after it, and then went his way with a sigh. If this expressed general mistrust, he ought three days afterward to have been reassured. He received by the post a note containing these words—

"I have done it. Begin and respect me!

C. L."

To be perfectly satisfactory, indeed, the note required a commentary. Calling that

evening upon Roderick, he found one in the information offered him at the door by the old serving-woman—the startling information that the signorino had gone to Naples.

## VII.

About a month later Rowland addressed to his cousin Cecilia a letter of which the following is a portion.

. . . . "So much for myself; yet I tell tell you but a tithe of my own story unless I let you know how matters stand with poor Hudson, for he gives me more to think about just now than anything else in the world. I need a good deal of courage to begin this chapter. You warned me, you know, and I made rather light of your warning. I have had all kinds of hopes and fears, but hitherto, in writing to you, I have resolutely put the hopes foremost. Now, however, my pride has forsaken me, and I should like hugely to give expression to a little comfortable despair. I should like to say, 'My dear wise cousin,

you were right and I was wrong; you were a shrewd observer and I was a meddlesome donkey!' When I think of a certain talk we had about the 'salubrity of genius,' I feel my ears tingle. If this is salubrity, give me raging disease! I am pestered to death; I go about with a chronic heartache; there are moments when I could shed salt tears. There's a pretty portrait of the most placid of men! I wish I could make you understand; or rather I wish you could make me! I don't understand a jot; it's a hideous, mocking mystery; I give it up! I don't in the least give it up, you know; I am incapable of giving it up. I sit holding my head by the hour, racking my brain, wondering what to invent. You told me at Northampton that I took the thing too easily; you would tell me now perhaps that I take it too hard. I do, altogether; but it can't be helped. Without flattering myself I may say I am sympathetic. Many another man, before this, would have cast his perplexities to

the winds and declared that Master Hudson must lie on his bed as he had made it. Some men perhaps would even say that I am making a mighty ado about nothing, that I have only to give him rope and he will tire himself out. But he tugs at his rope altogether too hard for *me* to hold it comfortably! I certainly never pretended the thing was anything but an experiment; I promised nothing, I answered for nothing; I only said that the case was hopeful and it would be a shame not to give him a chance. I have done my best, and if the machine is running down I have a right to stand aside and let it rattle. Amen, amen! No, I can write that, but I can't feel it. I can't be just; I can only be generous. I am fond of the poor devil and I can't give him up. As for understanding him, that's another matter; nowadays I don't believe even you would. One's wits are sadly pestered over here, I assure you, and I am in the way of seeing more than one peculiar specimen of human nature. Roderick

and Miss Light, between them! . . . . . Haven't I already told you about Miss Light? Last winter everything was perfection. Roderick struck out bravely, did really great things, and proved himself as I supposed thoroughly solid. He was strong, he was first-rate; I felt perfectly secure and paid myself all kinds of compliments. We had passed at a bound into the open sea and left danger behind. But in the summer I began to be uneasy, though I succeeded in not being alarmed. When we came back to Rome however I saw that the tide had turned and that we were close upon the rocks. It is in fact another case of Ulysses and the Sirens; only Roderick refuses to be tied to the mast. He is the most extraordinary being, the strangest mixture of qualities. I don't understand so much force going with so much weakness—such a brilliant gift being subject to such lapses. The poor fellow is incomplete, and it is really not his own fault; Nature has given him his faculty out of hand and bidden him

be hanged with it! I never knew a man harder to advise or assist, if he is not in the mood for listening. I suppose there is some key or other to his character, but I try in vain to find it; and yet I can't believe that Providence is so cruel as to have turned the lock and thrown the key away. He perplexes me to death, and though he tires out my patience he still fascinates me. Sometimes I think he has not a grain of conscience, and sometimes I think that in a way he has an excess. He takes things at once too easily and too hard; he is both too lax and too tense, too reckless and too ambitious, too cold and too passionate. He has developed faster even than you prophesied, and for good and evil alike he takes up a formidable space. There's too much of him for me, at any rate. Yes, he *is* hard; there is no mistake about that. He's inflexible, he's brittle; and though he has plenty of spirit, plenty of soul, he hasn't what I call a heart. He has something that Miss Garland took for one, and I am

pretty sure she's a judge. But she judged on scanty evidence. He has something that Christina Light, here, makes believe at times that she takes for one, but she is no judge at all! I think it is established that in the long run egotism makes a failure in conduct: is it also true that it makes a failure in the arts? . . . . Roderick's standard is immensely high; I must do him that justice. He will do nothing beneath it, and while he is waiting for inspiration, his imagination, his nerves, his senses must have something to amuse them. This is a highly philosophic way of saying that he has taken to riotous living and has just been spending a month at Naples—a city where 'pleasure' is actively cultivated—in very bad company. Are they all like that, all the men of genius? There are a great many artists here who hammer away at their trade with exemplary industry; in fact I am surprised at their success in reducing the matter to a virtuous habit; but I really don't think that one of them has his exquisite quality of

talent. It is in the matter of quantity that he has broken down. Nothing comes out of the bottle; he turns it upside down; it's no use! Sometimes he declares it's empty—that he has done all he was made to do. This I consider great nonsense; but I would nevertheless take him on his own terms if it were only I that was concerned. But I keep thinking of those two praying, trusting neighbours of yours, and I feel uncommonly like a swindler. If his working mood came on but once in five years I would willingly wait for it and keep him on his legs somehow in the intervals; but that would be a sorry account to present to *them!* Five years of this sort of thing moreover would effectually settle the question. I wish he were less of a genius and more of a charlatan! He's too confoundedly all of one piece; he won't throw overboard a grain of the cargo to save the rest. Fancy him thus with all his brilliant personal charm, his handsome head, his careless step, his look as of a nervous nineteenth-

century Apollo, and you will understand that there is mighty little comfort in seeing him go to the bad. He was tolerably foolish last summer at Baden-Baden, but he got on his feet and for a while he was steady. Then he began to waver again and at last toppled over. Now, literally, he's lying prone! He came into my room last night miserably tipsy. I assure you it didn't amuse me. . . . About Miss Light it's a long story. She is one of the great beauties of all time, and worth coming barefoot to Rome like the pilgrims of old to see. Her complexion, her glance, her step, her dusky tresses, may have been seen before in a goddess, but never in a woman. And you may take this for truth, because I am not in love with her. On the contrary! Her education has been simply infernal. She is corrupt, perverse, as proud as a potentate, and a coquette of the first magnitude; but she is generous and intelligent, and if you set rightly to work you may enlist her imagination in a good cause as well

as in a bad one. The other day I tried to bring it over to my side. I happened to have some talk with her to which it was possible to give a serious turn, and I boldly broke ground and begged her to suffer my poor friend to go in peace. After leading me rather a dance—in conversation—she consented, and the next day, with a single word, she packed him off to Naples to drown his sorrow in debauchery. I have come to the conclusion that she is more dangerous in her virtuous moods than in her vicious ones, and that she probably has a way of turning her back which is the most provoking thing in the world. She is an actress, she couldn't forego doing the thing dramatically, and it was the dramatic touch that made it fatal. I wished her of course to let him down easily; but she desired to have the curtain drop on an attitude, and her attitudes have the property of depriving inflammable young artists of their reason. . . . . Roderick made an admirable bust of her at the beginning of the

winter, and a dozen women came rushing to him to be done, *mutatis mutandis*, in the same style. They were all great ladies and ready to take him by the hand, but he told them all their faces didn't interest him and sent them away vowing his destruction."

At this stage of his long burst of confidence Rowland had paused and put by his letter. He kept it three days and then read it over. He was disposed at first to destroy it, but he decided finally to keep it, in the hope that it might strike a spark of useful suggestion from the flint of Cecilia's good sense. We know he had a talent for taking advice. And then it might be, he reflected, that his cousin's answer would throw some light on Mary Garland's present vision of things. In his altered mood he added these few lines—

"I unburdened myself the other day of this monstrous load of perplexity; I think it did me good, and I will let it stand. I was in a melancholy muddle, and I was trying to

wriggle out of it. You know I like discussion, in a quiet way, and there is no one with whom I can have it as quietly as with you, most sagacious of cousins! There is an excellent old lady with whom I often chat and who talks very much to the point. But Madame Grandoni has disliked Roderick from the first, and if I were to take her advice I would wash my hands of him. You would laugh at me for my long face, but you would do that in any circumstances. I am half ashamed of my letter, for I have a faith in my friend that is deeper than my doubts. He was here last evening, talking about the Naples Museum, the Aristides, the bronzes, the Pompeian frescoes, with such a beautiful intelligence that doubt of the ultimate future seemed blasphemy. I walked back to his lodging with him, and he was as mild as midsummer moonlight. He has that ineffable something that charms and convinces; my last word about him shall not be a harsh one."

Shortly after sending his letter, going one day into his friend's studio, he found Roderick suffering the honourable torture of a visit from Mr. Leavenworth. Roderick submitted with extreme ill grace to being bored, and he was now evidently in a state of high exasperation. He had lately begun a representation of a *lazzarone* lounging in the sun; an image of serene, irresponsible, sensuous life. The real lazzarone, he had admitted, was a vile fellow; but the ideal lazzarone—and his own had been subtly idealised—was the flower of a perfect civilisation.

Mr. Leavenworth had apparently just transferred his unhurrying gaze to the figure.

"Something in the style of the Dying Gladiator?" he sympathetically observed.

"Oh no," said Roderick seriously, "he is not dying, he is only drunk!"

"Ah, but intoxication, you know," Mr. Leavenworth rejoined, "is not a proper subject for sculpture. Sculpture should not deal with transitory attitudes."

"Lying dead drunk is not a transitory attitude! Nothing is more permanent, more sculpturesque, more monumental!"

"An entertaining paradox," said Mr. Leavenworth, "if we had time to exercise our wits upon it. I remember at Florence an intoxicated figure by Michael Angelo which seemed to me a deplorable aberration of a great mind. I myself touch liquor in no shape whatever. I have travelled through Europe on cold water. The most varied and attractive lists of wines are offered me, but I brush them aside. No cork has ever been drawn at my command!"

"The movement of drawing a cork calls into play a very pretty set of muscles," said Roderick. "I think I will make a figure in that position."

"A Bacchus realistically treated! My dear young friend, never trifle with your lofty mission. Spotless marble should represent virtue, not vice!" And Mr. Leavenworth placidly waved his hand, as if to

exorcise the spirit of levity, while his glance journeyed with leisurely benignity to another object—a marble replica of the bust of Christina. "An ideal head I presume," he went on; "a fanciful representation of one of the pagan goddesses—a Diana, a Flora, a naiad or dryad? I often regret that our American artists should not boldly cast off that extinct nomenclature."

"She is neither a naiad nor a dryad," said Roderick, "and her name is as good as yours or mine."

"You call her—?" Mr. Leavenworth blandly inquired.

"Christina Light," Rowland interposed in charity.

"Ah, our great American beauty! Not a pagan goddess—an American, Christian lady! Yes, I have had the pleasure of conversing with Miss Light. Her conversational powers are not remarkable, but her beauty is of a high order. I observed her the other evening at a large party, where some of the

proudest members of the European aristocracy were present — duchesses, princesses, countesses, and others distinguished by similar titles. But for beauty, grace and elegance my fair countrywoman left them all nowhere. What women can compare with a truly refined American lady? The duchesses the other night had no attractions for my eyes; they looked coarse and sensual! It seemed to me that the tyranny of class distinctions must indeed be terrible when such countenances could inspire admiration. You see more beautiful girls in an hour on Broadway than in the whole tour of Europe. Miss Light now, on Broadway, would excite no particular remark."

"Oh, damn Broadway!" Roderick murmured.

Mr. Leavenworth stared, as if this were unpatriotic; then he resumed, almost severely —"I suppose you have heard the news about our fair countrywoman."

"What news?" Roderick had stood with

his back turned, fiercely poking at his *lazzarone*; but at Mr. Leavenworth's last words he faced quickly about.

"It's the news of the hour, I believe. Miss Light is admired by the highest people here. They tacitly recognise her superiority. She has had offers of marriage from various great lords. I was extremely happy to learn this circumstance, and to know that they all had been left sighing. She has not been dazzled by their titles and their gilded coronets. She has judged them simply as men, and found them wanting. One of them however, a young Neapolitan prince I believe, has after a long probation succeeded in making himself acceptable. Miss Light has at last said yes, and the engagement has just been announced. I am not generally a reporter of the gossip of the passing hour, but the fact was alluded to an hour ago by a lady with whom I was conversing, and here in Europe these conventional futilities usurp the lion's share of one's attention. I therefore retained the circumstance in

my mind. Yes, I regret that Miss Light should marry one of these used-up foreigners. Americans should stand by each other. If she wanted a brilliant match we could have organised it for her. If she wanted a fine fellow—a fine sharp enterprising modern man—I would have undertaken to find him for her without going out of my native city—Columbus, Ohio. And if she wanted a big fortune, I would have found her twenty that she would have had hard work to spend; money down—not tied up in fever-stricken lands and worm-eaten villas! What is the name of the young man? Prince Castaway, or some such thing!"

It was well for Mr. Leavenworth that he was fond of listening to his own correct periods; for the current of his eloquence floated him past the short sharp startled cry with which Roderick greeted his anecdote. The young man stood looking at him with parted lips and an excited eye.

"The position of woman," Mr. Leaven-

worth thoughtfully resumed, "is certainly a very degraded one in these countries. I doubt whether a European princess can command the respect which in our country is exhibited towards the obscurest females. The civilisation of a country should be measured by the deference shown to the weaker sex. Judged by that standard, where are they over here?"

Though Mr. Leavenworth had not observed Roderick's emotion it was not lost upon Rowland, who was making sundry uncomfortable reflections upon it. He saw that it had instantly become one with the acute irritation produced by the poor gentleman's oppressive personality, and that an explosion of some sort was imminent. Mr. Leavenworth, with calm unconsciousness, proceeded to fire the mine.

"And now for our Culture!" he said in the same sonorous tones, demanding with a gesture the unveiling of the figure, which stood somewhat apart, muffled in a great sheet.

Roderick stood looking at him for a moment with concentrated rancour, and then strode to the statue and twitched off the cover. Mr. Leavenworth settled himself into his chair with an air of flattered proprietorship and scanned the unfinished image. "I can conscientiously express myself as gratified with the general conception," he said. "The figure has considerable majesty and the countenance wears a fine open expression. The forehead, however, strikes me as not sufficiently intellectual. In a statue of Culture, you know, that should be the great point. The eye should instinctively seek the forehead. Couldn't you elevate it a little?"

Roderick, for all answer, tossed the sheet back over the statue. "Oblige me, sir," he said, "oblige me! Never mention that thing again."

"Never mention it? Why, my dear sir"——

"Never mention it. It's an abomination!"

"An abomination! My Culture!"

"Yours indeed!" cried Roderick. "It's none of mine. I disown it."

"Disown it if you please," said Mr. Leavenworth, sternly, "but finish it first!"

"I would rather smash it!" cried Roderick.

"This is folly, sir. You must keep your engagements."

"I made no engagement. A sculptor isn't a tailor. Did you ever hear of inspiration? Mine is dead! And it's no laughing matter. You yourself killed it."

"I—I—killed your inspiration?" cried Mr. Leavenworth, with the accent of righteous wrath. "You are a very ungrateful young man! If ever I have been encouraging to any one, I have been so to you!"

"I appreciate your good intentions and I don't wish to be uncivil. But your encouragement is—superfluous. I can't work for you!"

"I call this ill-humour, my good sir!" said Mr. Leavenworth, as if he had found the damning word.

"Oh, I'm in an infernal humour!" Roderick answered.

"Pray, sir, is it my inopportune allusion to Miss Light's marriage?"

"It's your inopportune everything! I don't say that to offend you; I beg your pardon if it does. I say it by way of making our rupture complete, irretrievable!"

Rowland had stood by in silence, but he now interfered. "Listen to me," he said, laying his hand on Roderick's arm. "You are standing on the edge of a gulf. If you suffer this accident to put you out, you take your plunge. It's no matter that you don't like your work; you will do the wisest thing you ever did if you make the effort of will necessary for finishing it. Destroy the statue then, if you like, but make the effort. I speak the truth!"

Roderick looked at him with eyes that still inexorableness made almost tender. "You too?" he simply said.

Rowland felt that he might as well attempt

to squeeze water from a polished crystal as hope to move him. He turned away and walked into the adjoining room with a sense of sickening helplessness. In a few moments he came back and found that Mr. Leavenworth had departed—presumably in a manner sufficiently majestic. Roderick was sitting with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

Rowland made one more attempt. "You won't mind me, eh?"

"Be so good as not to mind *me!*"

"There's one more point—that you shouldn't go to Mrs. Light's for a month."

"I shall go there this evening."

"That too is an utter folly."

"There are such things as necessary follies."

"You are not reflecting; you are speaking in passion."

"Why then do you make me speak?"

Rowland meditated a moment. "Is it also necessary that you should lose the best friend you have?"

Roderick looked up. "That's for you to settle!"

His best friend clapped on his hat and strode away; in a moment the door closed behind him.

## VIII.

Rowland walked hard for a couple of hours. He passed up the Corso, out of the Porta del Popolo and into the Villa Borghese, of which he made a complete circuit. The keenness of his irritation subsided, but it left him with an intolerable weight on his heart. When dusk had fallen he found himself near the lodging of his friend Madame Grandoni. He frequently paid her a visit during the hour which preceded dinner, and he now ascended her unillumined staircase and rang at her relaxed bell-rope with an especial desire for diversion. He was told that for the moment she was occupied, but that if he would come in and wait she would presently be with him. He had not sat musing in the firelight for ten minutes when he heard the jingle of the door-

bell and then a rustling and murmuring in the hall. The door of the little parlour opened, but before the visitor appeared he had recognised her voice. Christina Light swept forward, preceded by her poodle and almost filling the narrow room with the train of her dress. She was coloured here and there by the flicking firelight.

"They told me you were here," she said simply, as she took a seat.

"And yet you came in? It is very brave," said Rowland.

"You are the brave one when one thinks of it! Where is the padrona?"

"Occupied for the moment. But she is coming."

"How soon?"

"I have already waited ten minutes; I expect her from moment to moment."

"Meanwhile we are alone?" And she glanced into the dusky corners of the room.

"Unless Stenterello counts," said Rowland.

"Oh, he knows my secrets—unfortunate

brute!" She sat silent awhile, looking into the firelight. Then at last, glancing at Rowland, "Come! say something pleasant!" she exclaimed.

"I have been very happy to hear of your engagement."

"No, I don't mean that. I have heard that so often, only since breakfast, that it has lost all sense. I mean some of those unexpected charming things that you said to me a month ago at St. Cecilia's."

"I offended you then," said Rowland. "I was afraid I had."

"Ah, it occurred to you? Why haven't I seen you since?"

"Really I don't know." And he began to hesitate for an explanation. "I have called—but you have never been at home."

"You were careful to choose the wrong times. You have a way with a poor girl! You sit down and inform her that she is a person with whom a respectable young man can't associate without contamination; your

friend is a very nice fellow, you are very careful of his morals, you wish him to know none but nice people, and you beg me therefore to desist. You request me to take these suggestions to heart and to act upon them as promptly as possible. They are not particularly flattering to my vanity. Vanity however is a sin, and I listen submissively, with an immense desire to be just. If I have many faults I know it in a general way and I try on the whole to do my best. '*Voyons*,' I say to myself, 'it isn't particularly charming to hear oneself made out such a low person, but it is worth thinking over; there is probably a good deal of truth in it, and at any rate we must be as good a girl as we can. That's the great point! And then here's a magnificent chance for humility. If there's doubt in the matter, let the doubt count against oneself. That is what Saint Catherine did, and Saint Theresa, and all the others, and they are said to have had in consequence the most ineffable joys. Let us go in for a little ineffable joy!

I tried it; I swallowed my rising sobs, I made you my curtsey, I determined I would not be spiteful, nor passionate, nor vengeful, nor anything that is supposed to be particularly feminine. I was a better girl than you made out—better at least than you thought; but I would let the difference go, and do magnificently right lest I should not do right enough. I thought of it a great deal for six hours, when I know I didn't seem to be thinking, and then at last I did it! *Santo Dio!*"

"My dear Miss Light, my dear Miss Light!" said Rowland pleadingly.

"Since then," the young girl went on, "I have been waiting for the ineffable joys. They haven't yet turned up!"

"Pray listen to me!" Rowland urged.

"Nothing, nothing, nothing has come of it. I have passed the dreariest month of my life!'

"You are a very terrible young woman!" cried Rowland.

"What do you mean by that?"

"A good many things. We will talk them over. But, first, forgive me if I have offended you!"

She looked at him a moment, hesitating, and then thrust her hands into her muff. "That means nothing. Forgiveness is between equals, and you don't regard me as your equal."

"Really I don't understand!"

Christina rose and moved for a moment about the room. Then turning suddenly, "You don't believe in me!" she cried; "not a grain! I don't know what I would not give to *force* you to believe in me!"

Rowland sprang up, protesting, but before he had time to go far one of the scanty *portières* was raised, and Madame Grandoni came in, pulling her wig straight. "But you shall believe in me yet," murmured Christina as she passed toward her hostess.

Madame Grandoni turned tenderly to Christina. "I must give you a very solemn

kiss, my dear; you are the heroine of the hour. You have really accepted him, eh?"

"So they say!"

"But you ought to know best."

"I don't know—I don't care!" She stood with her hand in Madame Grandoni's, but looking askance at Rowland.

"That's a pretty state of mind," said the old lady, "for a young person who is going to become a princess."

Christina shrugged her shoulders. "Every one expects me to go into ecstacies over that! Could anything be more vulgar? They may chuckle by themselves! Will you let me stay to dinner?"

"If you can dine on a *risotto*. But I imagine you are expected at home."

"You are right. Prince Casamassima dines there *en famille*. But I am not in his family yet!"

"Do you know you are very wicked? I have half a mind not to keep you."

Christina dropped her eyes reflectively. "I

beg you will let me stay," she said. "If you wish to cure me of my wickedness you must be very patient and kind with me. It will be worth the trouble. You must show confidence in me." And she gave another glance at Rowland. Then suddenly, in a different tone, "I don't know what I am saying!" she cried. "I am weary, I am more lonely than ever, I wish I were dead!" The tears rose to her eyes, she struggled with them an instant and buried her face in her muff; but at last she burst into uncontrollable sobs and flung her arms upon Madame Grandoni's neck. This shrewd woman gave Rowland a significant nod and a little shrug, over the young girl's beautiful bowed head, and then led Christina tenderly away into the adjoining room. Rowland, left alone, stood there for an instant, intolerably puzzled, face to face with Miss Light's poodle, who had set up a sharp unearthly cry of sympathy with his mistress. Rowland vented his confusion in dealing a rap with his stick at the animal's unmelodious

muzzle, and then rapidly left the house. He saw Mrs. Light's carriage waiting at the door and heard afterwards that Christina went home to dinner.

A couple of days later he went for a fortnight to Florence. He had twenty minds to leave Italy altogether; and at Florence he could at least more freely decide upon his future movements. He felt deeply, incurably disgusted. Reflective benevolence stood prudentlyaside and for the time touched the source of his irritation with no softening side-lights.

It was the middle of March, and by the middle of March in Florence the spring is already warm and deep. He had an infinite relish for the place and the season, but as he strolled by the Arno and paused here and there in the great galleries they failed to soothe his irritation. He was sore at heart, and as the days went by the soreness deepened rather than healed. He felt as if he had a complaint against fortune; good-natured as he was, his good-nature this time quite declined

to let it pass. He had tried to be wise, he had tried to be kind, he had engaged in an estimable enterprise; but his wisdom, his kindness, his energy, had been thrown back in his face. He was disappointed, and his disappointment had an angry spark in it. The sense of wasted time, of wasted hope and faith, kept him constant company. There were times when the beautiful things about him only exasperated his discontent. He went to the Pitti Palace, and Raphael's Madonna of the Chair seemed in its soft serenity to mock him with the suggestion of unattainable repose. He lingered on the bridges at sunset and knew that the light was enchanting and the mountains were divine, but there seemed to be something horribly invidious and unwelcome in the fact. He felt in a word like a man who has been cruelly defrauded and who wishes to have his revenge. Life owed him, he thought, a compensation, and he should be restless and resentful until he found it. He knew—or he seemed to know—where

he should find it; but he hardly told himself, and thought of the thing under mental protest, as a man in want of money may think of certain funds that he holds in trust. In his melancholy meditations the idea of something better than all this, something that might softly, richly interpose, something that might reconcile him to the future, something that might make one's tenure of life strong and zealous instead of mechanical and uncertain—the idea of concrete compensation in a word—shaped itself sooner or later into the image of Mary Garland.

Very odd, you may say, that at this time of day Rowland should still be brooding over a girl of no brilliancy, of whom he had had but the lightest of glimpses two years before; very odd that so deep an impression should have been made by so lightly pressed an instrument. We must admit the oddity and remark simply in explanation that his sentiment apparently belonged to that species of emotion of which by the testimony of the poets the very

name and essence are oddity. One night he slept but half an hour; he found his thoughts taking a turn which excited him portentously. He walked up and down his room half the night. It looked out on the Arno; the noise of the river came in at the open window; he felt like dressing and going down into the streets. Towards morning he flung himself into a chair; though he was wide awake he was less excited. It seemed to him that he saw his idea from the outside, that he judged it and condemned it; yet it stood there before him, very distinct and in a certain way imperious. During the day he tried to banish it and forget it; but it fascinated, haunted, at moments frightened him. He tried to amuse himself, paid visits, resorted to several violent devices for diverting his thoughts. If on the morrow he had committed a crime, the persons whom he had seen that day would have testified that he had talked strangely and had not seemed like himself. He felt certainly very unlike himself; long afterwards,

in retrospect, he used to reflect that during those days he had for a while been literally *beside* himself. His idea persisted; it clung to him like a sturdy beggar. The sense of the matter, roughly expressed, was this. If Roderick were really going, as he himself had phrased it, to "fizzle out," one might help him on the way—one might smooth the *descensus Averni.* For forty-eight hours there swam before Rowland's eyes a vision of Roderick, graceful and beautiful as he passed, plunging like a diver into a misty gulf. The gulf was destruction, annihilation, death; but if death were decreed, why should not the agony be brief? Beyond this vision there faintly glimmered another, as in the children's game of the magic lantern a picture is superposed on the white wall before the last one has quite faded. It represented Mary Garland standing there with eyes in which the horror seemed slowly, slowly to expire, and hanging motionless hands which at last made no resistance when his own offered to take

them. When of old a man was burnt at the stake it was cruel to have to be present; but if one were present it was a charity to lend a hand to pile up the fuel and make the flames do their work quickly and the smoke muffle up the victim. With all deference to your charity this was perhaps an obligation you would especially feel if you had a reversionary interest in something the victim was to leave behind him.

One morning in the midst of all this Rowland walked heedlessly out of one of the city gates and found himself on the road to Fiesole. It was a completely lovely day; the March sun felt like May, as the English poet of Florence says; the thick-blossomed shrubs and vines that hung over the walls of villa and *podere* flung their odorous promise into the warm still air. Rowland followed the winding climbing lanes; lingered as he got higher beneath the rusty cypresses, beside the low parapets, where you look down on the charming city and sweep the vale of the Arno;

reached the little square before the cathedral and rested awhile in the massive, dusky church; then climbed higher, to the Franciscan convent which is poised on the very apex of the great hill. He rang at the little gateway; a shabby, senile, red-faced brother admitted him with almost maudlin friendliness. There was a dreary chill in the chapel and the corridors, and he passed rapidly through them into the delightfully steep and tangled old garden which runs wild over the forehead of the mountain. He had been in it before, and he was very fond of it. The garden hangs in the air, and you ramble from terrace to terrace and wonder how it keeps from slipping down in full consummation of its dishonour and decay into the nakedly romantic gorge beneath. It was just noon when Rowland went in, and after roaming about awhile he flung himself in the sun on a mossy stone bench and pulled his hat over his eyes. The short shadows of the brown-coated cypresses above him had grown very

long, and yet he had not passed back through the convent. One of the monks, in his faded snuff-coloured robe, came wandering out into the garden, reading his greasy little breviary. Suddenly he came towards the bench on which Rowland had stretched himself, and paused a moment attentively. Rowland was lingering there still; he was sitting with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees. He seemed not to have heard the sandaled tread of the good brother, but as the monk remained watching him he at last looked up. It was not the ignoble old man who had admitted him, but a pale gaunt personage, of a graver and more ascetic, and yet of a benignant, aspect. Rowland's face bore the traces of extreme trouble. The *frate* kept his finger in his little book and folded his arms picturesquely across his breast. It can hardly be determined whether his attitude, as he bent his sympathetic Italian eye upon Rowland, was a happy incident or the result of an exquisite spiritual discernment. To Rowland,

at any rate, under the emotion of that moment, it seemed blessedly opportune. He rose and approached the monk, laying his hand on his arm.

"My brother," he said, "did you ever see the Devil?"

The *frate* gazed gravely and crossed himself. "Heaven forbid!"

"He was here," Rowland went on, "here in this lovely garden, as he was once in Paradise, half an hour ago. But have no fear; I drove him out." And Rowland stooped and picked up his hat, which had rolled away into a bed of cyclamen in vague symbolism of an actual physical tussle.

"You have been tempted, my brother?" asked the friar tenderly.

"Hideously!"

"And you have resisted—and conquered!"

"I believe I have conquered."

"The blessed Saint Francis be praised! It is well done. If you like we will offer a mass for you."

"I am not a Catholic," said Rowland.

The *frate* smiled with dignity. "That is a reason the more."

"But it's for you then to choose. Shake hands with me," Rowland added; "that will do as well; and suffer me as I go out to stop a moment in your chapel."

They shook hands and separated. The *frate* crossed himself, opened his book, and wandered away in relief against the western sky. Rowland passed back into the convent and paused long enough in the chapel to look for the alms-box. He had had what is vulgarly called a great scare; he believed very poignantly for the time in the Devil, and he felt an irresistible need to subscribe to any institution which engaged to keep him at a distance.

The next day he returned to Rome, and the day after that he went in search of Roderick. He found him on the Pincian, with his back turned to the crowd, looking at the sunset. "I went to Florence," Rowland

said, "and I thought of going farther; but I came back on purpose to give you another piece of advice. Decidedly, you won't leave Rome?"

"Never!" said Roderick.

"The only chance that I see then of a revival of your sense of responsibility to—to those various sacred things you have forgotten—is in sending for your mother to join you here."

Roderick stared. "For my mother?"

"For your mother—and for Miss Garland."

Roderick still stared; and then, slowly and faintly, his face flushed. "For Mary Garland—for my mother?" he repeated. "Send for them?"

"Tell me this; I have often wondered, but till now I have forborne to ask. You are still engaged to your cousin?"

Roderick frowned darkly, but assented.

"Wouldn't it give you pleasure then to see her?"

Roderick turned away and for some mo-

ments answered nothing. "Pleasure!" he said at last huskily. "Pain will do as well!"

"I regard you as a sick man," Rowland continued. "In such a case Miss Garland would say that her place is at your side."

Roderick looked at him some time askance, mistrustfully. "Is this a deep-laid snare?" he asked slowly.

Rowland had come back with all his patience rekindled, but these words gave it an almost fatal chill. "Heaven forgive you!" he cried bitterly. "My idea has been simply this—try in decency to understand it. I have tried to befriend you, to help you, to inspire you with confidence, and I have failed. I took you from the hands of your mother and that girl, and it seems to me my duty to restore you to their hands. That's all I have to say."

He was going, but Roderick forcibly detained him. It would have been but a rough way of expressing it to say that one could never know how Roderick would take a

thing. It had happened more than once that when hit hard deservedly he had received the blow with touching gentleness. On the other hand he had often resented the softest taps. The secondary effect of Rowland's present admonition seemed reassuring. "I beg you to wait," he said, "to forgive that shabby speech and to let me reflect." And he walked up and down awhile reflecting. At last he stopped, with a look in his face that Rowland had not seen all winter. It was strikingly beautiful.

"How strange it is," he said, "that the simplest devices are the last that occur to one!" And he broke into a light laugh. "To see Mary Garland is just what I want. And my mother—my mother can't hurt me now!"

"You will write then?"

"I will telegraph. They must come at whatever cost. Striker can arrange it all for them."

In a couple of days he told Rowland that

he had received a telegraphic answer to his message, informing him that the two ladies were to sail immediately for Leghorn in one of the small steamers which ply between that port and New York. They would arrive therefore in less than a month. Rowland passed this month of expectation in no very serene frame of mind. His suggestion had had its source in the deepest places of his agitated conscience; but there was something intolerable in the thought of the suffering to which the event would probably subject those undefended women. They had scraped together their scanty funds and embarked at twenty-four hours' notice upon the dreadful sea to journey tremulously to shores darkened by the shadow of deeper alarms. He could only promise himself to be their devoted friend and servant. Preoccupied as he was he was able to observe that expectation, with Roderick, took a form which seemed singular even among his characteristic singularities. If redemption—Roderick seemed to reason

—was to arrive with his mother and his affianced bride, these last moments of error should be doubly erratic. He did nothing; but inaction, with him, took on an unwonted air of gentle gaiety. He laughed and whistled and went often to Mrs. Light's; though Rowland failed to guess in what fashion present circumstances had modified his relations with Christina. The month ebbed away and Rowland daily expected to hear from Roderick that he had gone to Leghorn to meet the ship. He heard nothing, and late one evening, not having seen his friend in three or four days, he stopped at Roderick's lodging to assure himself that he had gone at last. A cab was standing in the street, but as it was a couple of doors off he hardly heeded it. The hall at the foot of the staircase was dark, like most Roman halls, and he paused in the open doorway on hearing the advancing footstep of a person with whom he wished to avoid coming into collision. While he did so he heard another footstep behind him, and turn-

ing round found that Roderick himself had just overtaken him. At the same moment a woman's figure advanced from within, into the light of the street-lamp, and a face, half startled, glanced at him out of the darkness. He gave a cry—it was the face of Mary Garland. Her glance flew past him to Roderick, and in a second a startled exclamation broke from her own lips. It made Rowland turn again. Roderick stood there, pale, apparently trying to speak, but saying nothing. His lips were parted, and he was wavering slightly with a strange movement—the movement of a man who has drunk too much. Then Rowland's eyes met Miss Garland's again, and her own, which had rested a moment on Roderick's, were formidable.

## IX.

How it occurred that Roderick had failed to be at Leghorn at the moment of his mother's arrival was never clearly ascertained; for he undertook to give no elaborate explanation of his fault. He never indulged in professions (touching personal conduct) as to the future or in remorse as to the past, and as he would have asked no praise if he had travelled night and day to embrace Mrs. Hudson as she set foot on shore, he made (in Rowland's presence at least) no apology for having left her to come in search of him. It was to be said that thanks to an unprecedentedly fine season the voyage of the two ladies had been surprisingly rapid, and that according to common probabilities if Roderick had left Rome on the morrow (as he declared that he had intended)

he would still have had a day or two of waiting at Leghorn. Rowland's silent inference was that Christina Light had beguiled him into letting the time slip, and it was accompanied with a silent inquiry whether she had done so unconsciously or maliciously. He had told her presumably that his mother and his cousin were about to arrive; and it was pertinent to remember hereupon that she was a young lady of mysterious impulses. Rowland heard in due time the story of the adventures of the two ladies from Northampton. Mary Garland's wish, at Leghorn, on finding they were left to their own devices, had been to telegraph to Roderick and await an answer; for she knew that their arrival was a trifle premature. But Mrs. Hudson's maternal heart had taken the alarm. Roderick's sending for them was, to her imagination, a confession of illness, and his not being at Leghorn, a proof of it; an hour's delay was therefore cruel both to herself and to him. She insisted on immediate departure; and, unskilled as they

were in the mysteries of foreign (or even of domestic) travel, they had hurried in trembling eagerness to Rome. They had arrived late in the evening, and knowing nothing of inns had got into a cab and proceeded to Roderick's lodging. At the door poor Mrs. Hudson's trepidation had overcome her and she had sat quaking and crying in the vehicle. Mary had bravely gone in, groped her way up the dusky staircase, reached Roderick's door and with the assistance of such acquaintance with the Italian tongue as she had culled from a phrase-book during the calm hours of the voyage, had learned from the old woman who had her cousin's household economy in charge that he was in the best of health and spirits and had gone forth a few hours before with his hat on his ear *per divertirsi.*

These things Rowland learned during a visit he paid the two ladies the evening after their arrival. Mrs. Hudson spoke of them at great length and with an air of clinging confidence in Rowland which told him that he

was now enshrined in her innermost favour. But her fright was over, though she was still catching her breath a little, like a person dragged ashore out of waters uncomfortably deep. She was excessively bewildered and confused, and seemed more than ever to demand a tender handling from her friends. Before her companion Rowland was distinctly conscious that he trembled. He wondered extremely what was going on in this young lady's mind; what was her silent commentary on the incidents of the night before. He wondered all the more because he immediately perceived that she was now an altered woman and that the difference was not an injury. She was older, easier, more free, she had more of the manner of society. She had more beauty as well, inasmuch as her beauty before had been the quality of her expression and the sources from which this beauty was fed had in these two years evidently not wasted themselves. Rowland felt almost instantly—he could hardly have said why; it

was in her voice, in her tone, in the air—that a total change had passed over her attitude towards himself. She trusted him now absolutely; whether or no she liked him, she believed in his solidity. He felt that during the coming weeks he should need to be solid. Mrs. Hudson was at one of the smaller hotels, and her sitting-room was frugally lighted by a couple of candles. Rowland made the most of this dim illumination to try to detect the afterglow of that frightened flash from Mary's eyes the night before. It had been but a flash, for what provoked it had instantly vanished. Rowland, on this occasion, seeing Roderick instantly perceive what had happened, had given him a silent blessing. If Roderick had been drinking, its gravity sobered him on the spot; in a single moment he collected his wits. The next moment, with a ringing jovial cry, he was folding the young girl in his arms, and the next he was beside his mother's carriage, half smothered in her sobs and caresses. Rowland had re-

commended an hotel close at hand and had then discreetly retired. Roderick was at this time doing his part superbly, and Mary Garland's brow was serene. It was serene now, twenty-four hours later; but nevertheless her alarm had lasted an appreciable moment. What had become of it? It had dropped down deep into her memory, and it was lying there for the present in the shade. But from one day to another, Rowland said to himself, it would hold up its head—it would begin to watch and listen—it would stand there confronting him. Meanwhile he made the most of the hours—he passed them in the consciousness of being near her. The two ladies had spent the day within doors, resting from the fatigues of travel. The younger traveller, Rowland suspected, was not so fatigued as she suffered it to be assumed. She had remained with Mrs. Hudson to attend to her personal wants, which the latter seemed to think now that she was in a foreign land with a southern climate and a Catholic

religion would forthwith become very complex and formidable, though as yet they had simply resolved themselves into a desire for a great deal of tea and for a certain extremely familiar old black and white shawl across her feet as she lay on the sofa. But the sense of novelty was evidently strong upon Mary, and the light of expectation was in her eye. She was restless and excited; she moved about the room and went often to the window; she was observing keenly; she watched the Italian servants as they came and went; she had already had a long colloquy with the French chambermaid, who had expounded her views on the Roman question; she noted the small differences in the furniture, in the cookery, in the sounds that came in from the street. Rowland was sure that she observed to good purpose, that she only needed opportunity, and that she would gather impressions as thickly clustered as the purple bunches of a vintage. He wished immensely he might have a hand in it; he wished he might show

her Rome. That of course would be Roderick's office. But he promised himself at least to take advantage of off-hours.

"It behoves you to appreciate your good fortune," he said to her. "To be young and elastic, and yet old enough and wise enough to discriminate and reflect, and to come to Italy for the first time—that is one of the greatest pleasures that life has to offer us. It is but right to remind you of it, so that you may make the most of your chances and may not accuse yourself later of having wasted the precious season."

Mary looked at him, smiling intently, and went to the window again. "I expect to enjoy it," she said. "Don't be afraid; I am not wasteful."

"I am afraid we are not qualified, you know," said Mrs. Hudson. "We are told that you must know so much, that you must have read so many books. Our taste has not been cultivated. When I was a young lady at school I remember I had a medal with a pink

ribbon for 'proficiency in ancient history'—the seven kings, or is it the seven hills? and Quintus Curtius and Julius Cæsar and—and that period, you know. I believe I have my medal somewhere in a drawer now, but I have forgotten all about the kings. But after Roderick came to Italy we tried to learn something about it. Last winter Mary used to read 'Corinne' to me in the evenings, and in the mornings she used to read another book to herself. What was it, Mary, that book that was so long, you know—in fifteen volumes?"

"It was Sismondi's 'Italian Republics,'" said Mary simply.

Rowland could not help laughing; whereupon Mary blushed. "Did you finish it?" he asked.

"Yes, and began another—a shorter one—Roscoe's 'Leo the Tenth.'"

"Did you find them interesting?"

"Oh yes."

"Do you like history?"

"Some of it."

"That's a woman's answer! And do you like art?"

She paused a moment. "I have never seen it!"

"You have great advantages now, my dear, with Roderick and Mr. Mallet," said Mrs. Hudson. "I am sure no young lady ever had such advantages. You come straight to the highest authorities. Roderick I suppose will show you the practice of art, and Mr. Mallet perhaps, if he will be so good, will show you the theory. As an artist's wife you ought to know something about it."

"One learns a good deal about it here by simply living," said Rowland; "by going and coming about one's daily avocations."

"Dear, dear, how wonderful that we should be here in the midst of it!" murmured Mrs. Hudson. "To think of art being out there in the streets! We didn't see much of it last evening as we drove from the station. But the streets were so dark, and we were so

frightened! But we are very easy now; are we not, Mary?"

"I am very happy," said Mary gravely, wandering back to the window again.

Roderick came in at this moment and kissed his mother, and then went over and joined his betrothed. Rowland sat with Mrs. Hudson, who evidently had a word which she deemed of some value for his private ear. She followed Roderick with intensely earnest eyes.

"I wish to tell you, sir," she said, "how very grateful—how very thankful—what a happy mother I am! I feel as if I owed it all to you. To find my poor boy so handsome, so prosperous, so elegant, so famous—and ever to have doubted of you! What must you think of me? You are our guardian angel, sir. I often say so to Mary."

Rowland wore in response to this speech a rather inscrutable countenance. He could only murmur that he was glad she found Roderick looking well. He had of course promptly asked himself whether it would be the best

policy just to give her a word of warning—turn the handle of the door through which, later, disappointment might enter. But he had determined to say nothing, and simply to wait for Roderick to find effective inspiration in those confidently expectant eyes. It was to be supposed that he was seeking for it now; he remained some time at the window with his cousin. But at last he turned away and came over to the fireside with a contraction of the eyebrows which seemed to intimate that the young girl's influence was for the moment at least not soothing. She presently followed him, and for an instant Rowland observed her watching him as if she thought him strange. "Strange enough," thought Rowland, "he may seem to her if he will!" Roderick directed his glance to his friend with a certain peremptory air which—roughly interpreted—was equivalent to a request to share the intellectual expense of entertaining the ladies. "Heaven help us!" Rowland cried within himself; "is he already tired of them?"

"To-morrow of course we must begin to put you through the mill," Roderick said to his mother. "And be it hereby known to Mallet that we count upon him to turn the wheel."

"I will do as you please, my son," said Mrs. Hudson. "So long as I have you with me I don't care where I go. We must not take up too much of Mr. Mallet's time."

"His time is inexhaustible; he has nothing under the sun to do. Have you, Rowland? If you had seen the big hole I have been making in it! Where will you go first? You have your choice—from the Scala Santa to the Cloaca Maxima."

"Let us take things in order," said Rowland. "We will go first to Saint Peter's. Miss Garland, I hope you are impatient to see Saint Peter's."

"I should like to go first to Roderick's studio," said Miss Garland.

"It's a very nasty place," said Roderick. "But do what you like."

"Yes, we must see your beautiful things before we can look contentedly at anything else," said Mrs. Hudson.

"I have no beautiful things," said Roderick. "You may see what there is! What makes you look so odd?"

This inquiry was abruptly addressed to his mother, who in response glanced appealingly at Mary, and raised a startled hand to her smooth hair.

"No, it's your face," said Roderick. "What has happened to it these two years? It has changed its expression."

"Your mother has prayed a great deal," said Mary simply.

"I didn't suppose of course it was from doing anything bad! It makes you a very good face—very interesting, very solemn. It has very fine lines in it; something might be done with it." And Rowland held one of the candles near the poor lady's head.

She was covered with confusion. "My

son, my son," she said with dignity, "I don't understand you."

In a flash all his old alacrity had come to him. "I suppose a man may admire his own mother!" he cried. "If you please, madam, you will sit to me for that head. It see it, I see it! I will make something that a queen can't get done for her."

Rowland respectfully urged her to assent; he saw Roderick was in the vein and would probably do something eminently original. She gave her promise at last after many soft inarticulate protests and a frightened petition that she might be allowed to keep her knitting.

Rowland returned the next day, with plenty of zeal for the part Roderick had assigned to him. It had been arranged that they should go to Saint Peter's. Roderick was in high good-humour, and in the carriage was watching his mother with a fine mixture of filial and professional interest. Mrs. Hudson looked up mistrustfully at the tall shabby houses and

grasped the side of the barouche in her hand, as if she were in a sail-boat in dangerous waters. Rowland sat opposite to Miss Garland. She was totally oblivious of her companions; from the moment the carriage left the hotel she sat gazing wide-eyed and absorbed at the objects about them. If Rowland had felt disposed he might have made a joke of her intense seriousness. From time to time he told her the name of a place or a building, and she nodded without looking at him. When they emerged into the great square between Bernini's colonnades she laid her hand on Mrs. Hudson's arm and sank back in the carriage, staring up at the vast yellow façade of the church. Inside the church Roderick gave his arm to his mother, and Rowland constituted himself the especial guide of the younger lady. He walked with her slowly everywhere and made the entire circuit, telling her all he knew of the history of the building. This was a great deal, but she listened attentively, keeping her eyes

fixed on the dome. To Rowland himself it had never seemed so radiantly sublime as at these moments; he felt almost as if he had designed it himself and had a right to be proud of it. He left Mary Garland a while on the steps of the choir, where she had seated herself to rest, and went to join their companions. Mrs. Hudson was watching a great circle of tattered *contadini*, who were kneeling before the image of Saint Peter. The fashion of their tatters fascinated her; she stood gazing at them in a sort of terrified pity and could not be induced to look at anything else. Rowland went back to Mary and sat down beside her.

"Well, what do you think of Europe?" he asked smiling.

"I think it's dreadful!" she said abruptly.

"Dreadful?"

"I feel so strangely—I could almost cry."

"How is it that you feel?"

"So sorry for the poor past, that seems to have died here in my heart in an hour!"

"But, surely, you are pleased—you are interested."

"I am overwhelmed. Here in a single hour everything is changed. It is as if a wall in my mind had been knocked down at a stroke. Before me lies an immense new world, and it makes the old one, the poor little narrow familiar one I have always known, seem pitiful."

"But you didn't come to Rome to keep your eyes fastened on that narrow little world. Forget it, turn your back on it and enjoy all this."

"I want to enjoy it; but as I sat here just now, looking up at that golden mist in the dome, I seemed to see in it the vague shapes of certain people and things at home. To enjoy, as you say, as these things demand of one to enjoy them, is to break with one's past. And breaking is a pain!"

"Don't mind the pain, and it will cease to trouble you. Enjoy, enjoy; it is your duty. Yours especially!"

"Why mine especially?"

"Because I am very sure that you have a mind formed to do justice to everything interesting and beautiful. You are extremely intelligent."

"You don't know," said the girl simply.

"In that matter one *feels*. I really think that I know better than you. I don't want to seem patronising, but I suspect that you are a capital subject for development. Give yourself the best company, trust yourself, let yourself go!"

She looked away from him for some moments, down the gorgeous vista of the great church. "But what you say," she said at last, "means *change!*"

"Change for the better!" cried Rowland.

"How can one tell? As one stands one knows the worst. It seems to me very frightful to develop," she added, with her complete smile.

"One is in for it in one way or another, and one might as well do it with a good grace

as with a bad! Since one can't escape life it is better to take it by the hand."

"Is this what you call life?" she asked.

"What do you mean by 'this'?"

"Saint Peter's—all this splendour, all Rome—pictures, ruins, statues, beggars, monks."

"It is not all of it, but it is a large part of it. All these things are impregnated with life; they are the results of an old and complex civilisation."

"An old and complex civilisation: I am afraid I don't like that."

"Don't conclude on that point just yet. Wait till you have tested it. While you wait you will see an immense number of very beautiful things—things that you are made to understand. They won't leave you as they found you; then you can judge. Don't tell me I know nothing about your understanding. I have a right to count upon it."

Mary gazed awhile aloft into the dome. "I am not sure I understand that," she said, nodding upward.

"I hope at least that at a cursory glance it pleases you," said Rowland. "You needn't be afraid to tell the truth. What strikes some people is that it is so remarkably small."

"Oh, it's large enough; it's very wonderful. There are things in Rome then," she added in a moment, turning and looking at him, "that are very, *very* beautiful?"

"Lots of them."

"Some of the most beautiful things in the world?"

"Unquestionably."

"What are they? which things have most beauty?"

"That is according to taste. I should say the antique sculpture."

"How long will it take to see it all; to know at least something about it?"

"You can see it all, as far as mere seeing goes, in a fortnight. But to know it is a thing for one's leisure. The more time you spend in the midst of it, the more you care for it." After a moment's hesitation he went

on, "Why should you grudge time? It's all in your way, since you are to be an artist's wife."

"I have thought of that," she said. "It may be that I shall always live here, among the most beautiful things in the world!"

"Very possibly! I should like to see you ten years hence."

"I dare say I shall seem greatly altered. But I am sure of one thing."

"Of what?"

"That for the most part I shall be quite the same. I ask nothing better than to believe the fine things you say about my understanding, but even if they are true it won't matter. I shall be what I was made, what I am now—a young woman from the country! The fruit of a civilisation not old and complex, but new and simple."

"I am delighted to hear it; that's an excellent basis."

"Perhaps if you show me anything more you will grow rather tired of my basis. Therefore I warn you."

"I am not frightened. I should like extremely to make a request of you. Be what you are, be what you choose; but *do*, sometimes, as I tell you."

If Rowland was not frightened, neither perhaps was his companion; but she seemed at least slightly disturbed. She proposed that they should join the others.

Mrs. Hudson spoke under her breath; she could not be accused of the want of reverence sometimes attributed to Protestants in the great Catholic temples. "Mary dear," she whispered, "suppose we had to kiss that dreadful brass toe. If I could only have kept our door-knocker at Northampton as bright as that! I think it's so heathenish; but Roderick says he thinks it's sublime."

Roderick had evidently grown a trifle perverse. "It's sublimer than anything that *your* religion asks you to do!" he exclaimed.

"Surely our religion sometimes gives us very difficult duties," said Mary.

"The duty of sitting in a whitewashed

meeting-house and listening to a nasal Puritan! I admit that's difficult. But it's not sublime. I am speaking of ceremonies, of forms. It is in my line, you know, to make much of forms. I think this is a very beautiful one. Couldn't you do it?" he demanded, looking at his cousin.

She looked back at him intently and then shook her head. "I think not!"

"Why not?"

"I don't know; I couldn't!"

During this little discussion our four friends were standing near the venerable image of Saint Peter, and a squalid, savage-looking peasant, a tattered ruffian of the most orthodox Italian aspect, had been performing his devotions before it. He turned away crossing himself, and Mrs. Hudson gave a little shudder of horror.

"After that," she murmured, "I suppose he thinks he is as good as any one! And here is another. Oh, what a beautiful person!"

A young lady had approached the sacred effigy, after having wandered away from a group of companions. She kissed the brazen toe, touched it with her forehead, and turned round facing our friends. Rowland then recognised Christina Light. He was stupefied at this indication that she had suddenly embraced the Catholic faith, for it was but a few weeks before that she had treated him to a passionate profession of indifference. Had she entered the church to put herself *en règle* with what was expected of a Princess Casamassima? While Rowland was mentally asking these questions she was approaching him and his friends on her way to the great altar. At first she did not perceive them.

Mary Garland had been gazing at her. "You told me," she said gently to Rowland, "that Rome contained some of the most beautiful things in the world. This surely is one of them!"

At this moment Christina's eye met Rowland's and before giving him any sign of

recognition she glanced rapidly at his companions. She saw Roderick, but she gave him no bow; she looked at Mrs. Hudson, she looked at Mary Garland. At Mary Garland she looked fixedly, piercingly, from head to foot, the slow pace at which she advanced making it possible. Then suddenly, as if she had perceived Roderick for the first time, she gave him a charming nod, a radiant smile. In a moment he was at her side. She stopped, and he stood talking to her; she continued to look at Mary.

"Why, Roderick knows her!" cried Mrs. Hudson, in an awe-struck whisper. "I supposed she was some great princess."

"She is—almost!" said Rowland. "She is the most beautiful girl in Europe, and Roderick has made her bust."

"Her bust? Dear, dear!" murmured Mrs. Hudson, vaguely shocked. "What a strange bonnet!"

"She has very strange eyes," said Mary, turning away.

The two ladies, with Rowland, began to descend toward the door of the church. On their way they passed Mrs. Light, the Cavaliere and the poodle, and Rowland informed his companions of the relation in which these personages stood to Roderick's young lady.

"Think of it, Mary!" said Mrs. Hudson. "What splendid people he must know! No wonder he found Northampton dull!"

"I like the sad little old gentleman," said Mary.

"Why do you call him sad?" Rowland asked, struck with the observation.

"He seems so!" she answered simply.

As they were reaching the door they were overtaken by Roderick, whose interview with Miss Light had perceptibly brightened his eye. "So you are acquainted with princesses?" said his mother softly as they passed into the portico.

"Miss Light is not a princess!" said Roderick curtly.

"But Mr. Mallet says so," urged Mrs. Hudson, rather disappointed.

"I meant that she was going to be," said Rowland.

"It's by no means certain that she is even going to be!" Roderick answered.

"Ah," said Rowland, "I give it up!"

## X.

Roderick almost immediately demanded that his mother should sit to him at his studio for her portrait, and Rowland ventured to add another word of urgency. If Roderick's idea had really taken hold of him it was an immense pity his inspiration should be wasted; inspiration in these days had become too precious a commodity. It was arranged therefore that for the present, during the mornings, Mrs. Hudson should place herself at her son's service. This involved but little sacrifice, for the good lady's appetite for antiquities was diminutive and bird-like, the usual round of galleries and churches fatigued her, and she was glad to purchase immunity from sight-seeing by a regular afternoon drive. It became natural in this way that Mary Gar-

land having her mornings free, Rowland should propose to be her cicerone. He could not find it in his heart to accuse Roderick of neglect of a girl who was united to him by a double bond, for it was natural that the inspirations of a man of genius should be both capricious and imperious; but of course he wondered how Mary felt, as the young man's promised wife, on being so summarily handed over to another man to be entertained. However she felt he was certain he should learn very little about it. There had been between them none but indirect allusions to her intended marriage; and Rowland had no desire to discuss it more largely, for he had no quarrel with matters as they stood. They wore the same delightful aspect through the lovely month of May, and the ineffable charm of Rome at that period seemed but the radiant sympathy of nature with his happy opportunity. The weather was divine; each particular morning, as he walked from his lodging to Mrs. Hudson's modest inn, seemed to have

a blessing upon it. The elder lady had usually gone off to the studio, and he found Mary sitting alone at the open window, turning the leaves of some book of artistic or antiquarian reference that he had given her. She always had a smile, she was always eager, alert, responsive. She might be grave by nature, she might be sad by circumstance, she might have secret doubts and pangs, but she was essentially young and strong and fresh and able to enjoy. Her enjoyment was not especially demonstrative, but it was curiously diligent. Rowland felt that it was not amusement and sensation that she coveted, but knowledge—facts that she might noiselessly lay away piece by piece in the fragrant darkness of her serious mind, so that under this head at least she should not be a perfectly portionless bride. She never merely pretended to understand; she let things go in her modest fashion at the moment; but she watched them on their way over the crest of the hill, and when her attention seemed not likely to be missed it went

hurrying after them and ran breathless at their side and begged them for the secret. Rowland took a high satisfaction in observing that she never mistook the second-best for the best, and that when she was in the presence of a masterpiece she recognised the importance of the occasion. She said many things which he thought very profound—that is if they really had the fine intention he suspected. This point he usually tried to ascertain; but he was obliged to proceed cautiously, for in her mistrustful shyness it seemed to her that cross-examination must necessarily be ironical. She wished to know just where she was going —what she would gain or lose. This was partly on account of the purity and rigidity of a mind that had not lived with its door ajar upon the high-road of thought, for passing ideas to drop in and out at their pleasure, but had made much of a few long visits from guests cherished and honoured—guests whose presence was a solemnity. But it was even more because Mary was conscious of a sort of

growing self-respect, a sense of devoting her life not to her own ends, but to those of another whose life would be large and brilliant. She had been brought up to think a great deal of "nature" and nature's innocent laws; but now Rowland had talked to her ingeniously of culture; her fresh imagination had responded and she was pursuing this mysterious object into retreats where the need for some intellectual effort gave her an air of charming tension. She wished to be very sure, to take only the best, knowing it to be the best. There was something exquisite in her pious desire to improve herself, and Rowland encouraged it none the less that its fruits were not for him. In spite of her lurking rigidity and angularity it was very evident that she had a native sense of beauty which only asked to become pliable and in which already at moments she lost herself delightedly. For all that she was not demonstrative, that her manner was simple and her small-talk of no very ample flow; for all that,

as she has said, she was a young woman from the country, and the country was West Nazareth, and West Nazareth was in its way a stubborn little fact, she was feeling the direct influence of the great amenities of the world, and they were shaping her with a divinely intelligent touch. "Oh, exquisite virtue of circumstance!" cried Rowland to himself, "that takes us by the hand and leads us forth out of corners where perforce our attitudes are a trifle contracted, and beguiles us into testing unappreciated faculties!" When he said to Mary Garland that he wished he might see her ten years hence, he was paying mentally an equal compliment to circumstance and to the girl herself. Capacity was there, it could be freely trusted; observation would have but to sow its generous seed. "A superior woman"—the idea had harsh associations, but he watched it imaging itself in the vagueness of the future with a kind of hopeless confidence.

They went a great deal to Saint Peter's, and

"that Roderick is a sculptor and not a painter."

The allusion resided almost exclusively in the extreme earnestness with which the words were uttered. Rowland asked her the reason of her gladness.

"It's not that painting is not fine," she said, "but that sculpture is finer. It is more manly!"

Rowland tried at times to make her talk about herself, but in this she had little skill. She seemed to him so much older, so much more pliant to social uses than when he had seen her at home, that he wished to make her tell him what she had been doing all those two years. He began by telling her that she was very different. "It appears, then," she said, "that after all one can grow in America!"

"Unquestionably, if one has a motive. Your growth then was unconscious? You did not watch yourself and water your roots?"

She paid no heed to his question. "I am willing to grant," she said, "that Europe is more delightful than I supposed; and I don't admit that I had thought meanly of its charms. But you must admit that America is better than you had supposed."

"I have not a fault to find with the country which produced you!"

"And yet you want me to change—to assimilate Europe I suppose you would call it."

"I have felt that desire only on general principles. Shall I tell you what I feel now? America has made you thus far; let America finish you! I should like to ship you back without delay and see what becomes of you. That sounds uncivil, and I admit there is a cold intellectual curiosity in it."

She shook her head. "The charm is broken; the thread is snapped! I prefer to remain here."

Invariably, when he was inclined to make of something they were talking of a direct

application to herself, she wholly failed to assist him; she made no response. Once, with a spark of ardent irritation, he told her she was very "secretive." At this she coloured a little, and he said that in default of any larger confidence it would at least be a satisfaction to make her confess to that charge. But even this satisfaction she denied him, and his only revenge was in making, two or three times afterwards, a softly ironical allusion to what he called by way of jocosity her slyness. He told her that she was what is termed in French a *sournoise*. "Very good," she answered, almost indifferently, "and now please tell me again—I have forgotten it—what you said an 'architrave' was."

It was on the occasion of her asking him a question of this kind that he charged her—still by way of jocosity, but in a tone in which, if she had been curious in the matter, she might have detected a spark of restless ardour—with having an insatiable avidity

for facts. "You are always snatching at information," he said; "you will never consent to have any disinterested conversation."

She frowned a little, as she always did when he arrested their talk upon something personal. But this time she assented and said that she knew she was eager for facts. "One must make hay while the sun shines," she added. "I must lay up a store of learning against dark days. After all, I can't believe that I shall be always in Rome."

He knew he had divined her real motive; but he felt that if he might have said to her—what it seemed impossible to say—that fortune possibly had a bitter disappointment in store for her, she would have been capable of answering immediately after the first sense of pain, "Say then that I am laying up resources for solitude!"

But all the accusations were not his own. He had been waiting once while they talked—they were differing and arguing a little—to see whether she would take her forefinger out

of her "Murray," into which she had inserted it to keep her place. It would have been hard to say why this point interested him, for he had not the slightest real apprehension that she was dry or pedantic. The simple human truth was that the poor fellow was jealous of science. In preaching science to her he had over-estimated his powers of self-effacement. Suddenly, sinking science for the moment, she looked at him very frankly and began to frown. At the same time she let the "Murray" slide down to the ground, and he was so charmed with this circumstance that he made no movement to pick it up.

"You are uncommonly inconsistent, Mr. Mallet," she said.

"Oh, nothing is more common than inconsistency."

"Not of your elaborate kind. That first day that we were in Saint Peter's you said things that inspired me. You bade me plunge into all this. I was all ready; I only wanted a little push; you gave me a great one; here I

am up to my neck! And now instead of helping me to swim you stand on the shore—the shore of superior information—and fling pebbles at me!"

"Pebbles, my dear young lady? They are life-preservers! I must have played my part very ill."

"Your part? What is your part supposed to have been?"

He hesitated a moment. "That of usefulness pure and simple."

"I don't understand you!" she said; and picking up her "Murray" she fairly buried her nose in it.

That evening he said something to her which she perhaps understood as little. "Do you remember my begging you the other day to do occasionally as I told you? It seemed to me you tacitly consented."

"Very tacitly!"

"I have never yet really presumed on your consent. But now I should like you to do this: whenever you catch me in the act of

what you call flinging pebbles, ask me the meaning of some architectural term. I shall know what you mean—a word to the wise!"

One morning they spent among the ruins of the Palatine, that sunny desolation of crumbling overtangled fragments, half excavated and half identified, known as the Palace of the Cæsars. Nothing in Rome is more interesting than this confused and crumbling garden, where you stumble at every step on the disinterred bones of the past; where damp frescoed corridors, relics possibly of Nero's Golden House, serve as gigantic bowers, and where in the spring-time you may sit on a Latin inscription in the shade of a flowering almond-tree and admire the composition of the Campagna. The day left a deep impression on Rowland's mind, partly owing to its intrinsic sweetness and partly because his companion on this occasion let her "Murray" lie unopened for an hour and asked several questions which had no connection with the Consuls

and the Cæsars. She had begun by saying that it was coming over her after all that Rome was a ponderously sad place. The sirocco was gently blowing, the air was heavy, she was tired, she looked a little pale.

"Everything," she said, "seems to say that all things are vanity. If one is doing something I suppose one feels a certain strength within one to say otherwise. But if one is idle, surely it is depressing to live year after year among the ashes of things that once were mighty. If I were to remain here I should either become permanently 'low,' as they say, or I would take refuge in some practical occupation."

"What occupation?"

"I would open a school for those beautiful little beggars; though I am sadly afraid I should never bring myself to scold them."

"I have no practical occupation," said Rowland, "and yet I have kept up a certain spirit."

"I don't call you unoccupied."

"It is very good of you. Do you remember our talking about that at Northampton?"

"During that walk in the woods? Perfectly. Has your coming abroad succeeded for yourself as well as you hoped?"

"I think I may say that it has turned out as well as I expected."

"Are you happy?"

"Don't I look so?"

"So it seems to me. But"—and she hesitated a moment—"I imagine you look happy whether you are so or not."

"I am like that ancient comic mask that we saw just now in yonder excavated fresco; I am made to grin."

"Shall you come back here next winter?"

"Very probably."

"Are you settled here for ever?"

"'For ever' is a long time. I live only from year to year."

"Shall you never marry?"

Rowland gave a laugh. "'For ever'—

'never!' You handle large ideas. I have not taken a vow of celibacy."

"Shouldn't you like to marry?"

"I should like it immensely."

To this she made no rejoinder; but presently she asked, "Why don't you write a book?"

Rowland laughed—this time more freely. "A book! What book should I write?"

"A history; something about art or antiquities."

"I have neither the learning nor the talent."

She made no attempt to contradict him; she simply said she had supposed otherwise. "You ought at any rate," she continued in a moment, "to do something for yourself."

"For myself? I should have supposed that if ever a man seemed to live for himself"—

"I don't know how it seems," she interrupted—"to careless observers. But we

know—we know that you have lived—a great deal—for *us*."

Her voice trembled slightly, and she brought out the last words with a little jerk.

"She has had that speech on her conscience," thought Rowland; "she has been thinking she owed it to me, and it seemed to her that now was her time to make it and have done with it."

She went on in a way which confirmed these reflections, speaking with due solemnity. "You ought to be made to know very well what we all feel. Mrs. Hudson tells me that she has told you what she feels. Of course Roderick has expressed himself. I have been wanting to thank you too; I do, from my heart."

Rowland made no answer; his face at this moment resembled the tragic mask much more than the comic. But Mary was not looking at him; she had taken up her eternal "Murray."

In the afternoon she usually drove with Mrs. Hudson, but Rowland frequently saw her again in the evening. He was apt to spend half an hour in the little sitting-room at the hôtel-pension on the slope of the Pincian, and Roderick, who dined regularly with his mother, was present on these occasions. Rowland saw him little at other times, and for three weeks no observations passed between them on the subject of Mrs. Hudson's advent. To Rowland's vision, as the weeks elapsed, the benefits to proceed from the presence of the two ladies remained shrouded in mystery. Roderick was peculiarly inscrutable. He was preoccupied with his work on his mother's portrait, which was taking a very happy turn; and often when he sat silent with his hands in his pockets, his legs outstretched, his head thrown back and his eyes on vacancy, it was to be supposed that his fancy was hovering about the half-shaped image in his studio, exquisite even in its immaturity. He said little, but

his silence did not of necessity imply disaffection, for he evidently found it a deep personal luxury to lounge away the hours in an atmosphere so charged with feminine tenderness. He was not alert, he suggested nothing in the way of excursions (Rowland was the prime mover in such as were attempted), but he conformed passively at least to the tranquil temper of the two women and made no harsh comments nor sombre allusions. Rowland wondered whether he had after all done his friend injustice in denying him the sentiment of duty. He refused invitations, to Rowland's knowledge, in order to dine at the sordid little table-d'hôte; wherever his spirit might be he was present in the flesh with religious constancy. Mrs. Hudson's felicity betrayed itself in a remarkable tendency to finish her sentences and wear her best black silk gown. Her tremors had trembled away; she was like a child who discovers that the shaggy monster it has so long been afraid to touch is an inanimate terror compounded of

straw and saw-dust, and that it is even a safe audacity to tickle its nose. As to whether the love-knot of which Mary Garland had the keeping still held firm, who should pronounce? The young girl, as we know, did not wear it on her sleeve. She always sat at the table, near the candles, with a piece of needle-work. This was the attitude in which Rowland had first seen her, and he thought, now that he had seen her in several others, that it was not the least becoming.

END OF VOL. II.

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